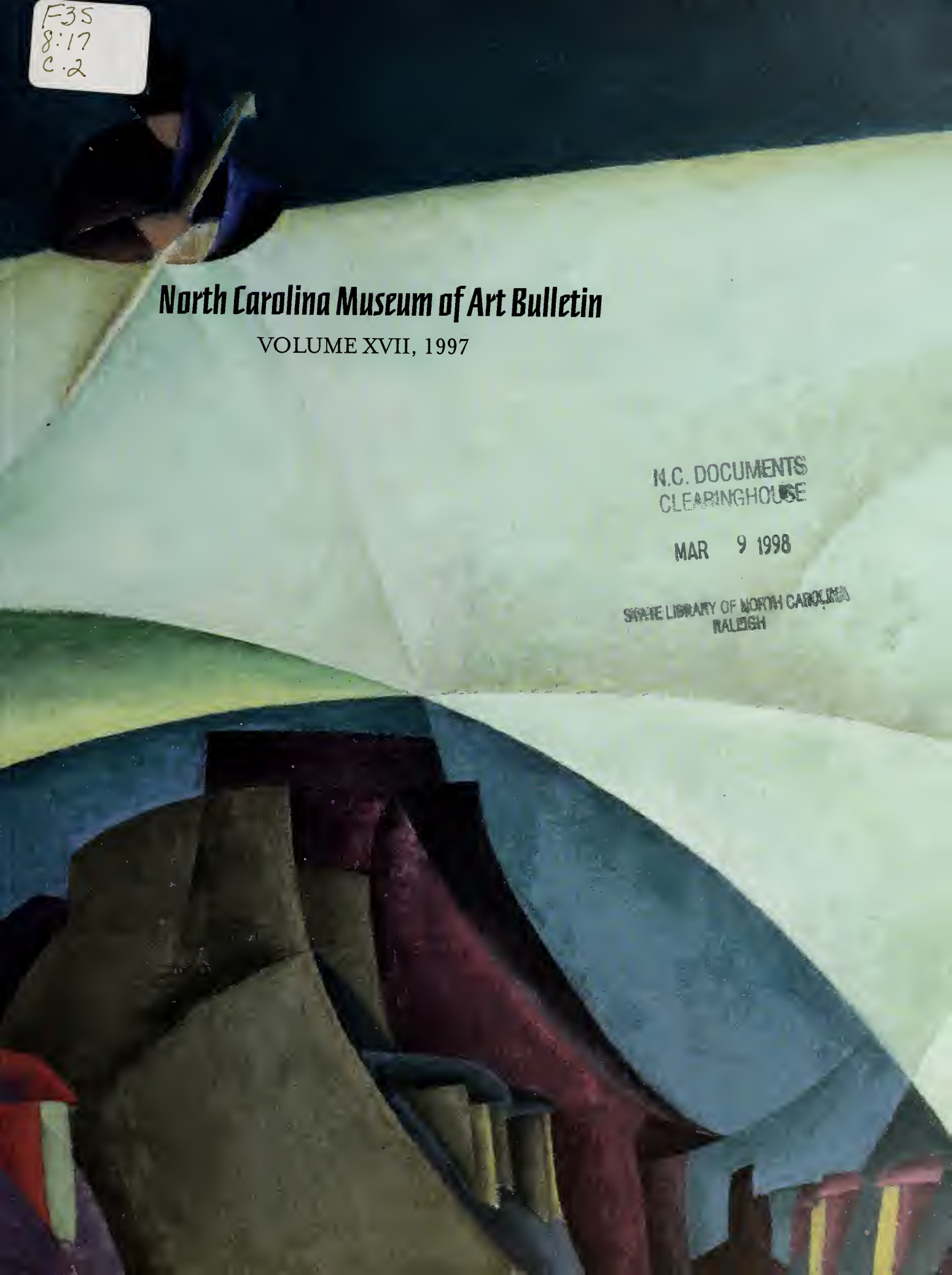
North Carolina Museum of Art Bulletin

VOLUME XVII, 1997



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Cover: Detail from *The Green Bridge II*, by Lyonel Feininger
See page 56.

North Carolina Museum of Art Bulletin

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W. R. Valentiner
American, born Germany, 1880–1958
Self-Portrait, circa 1901
Ink and watercolor on paper
Actual size
North Carolina Museum of Art
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner

Foreword

On 5 April 1997 the North Carolina Museum of Art observed its fiftieth birthday. The year-long celebration of this anniversary includes this issue of the *Bulletin*, which we dedicate to the Museum's first director, W. R. Valentiner. Though a man of catholic tastes, Dr. Valentiner (as he was invariably called) is often identified by his association with the German Expressionists. Four articles in this issue relate to works by the German Expressionist artists whom Valentiner championed, while the fifth examines an end-of-the-century heir to that tradition.

Pre-eminent scholar, sought-after connoisseur, and master museum builder, the German-born Valentiner was a central figure on the American art scene for much of the first half of this century. As director of the Detroit Institute of Arts in the 1920s and 1930s, he guided the development of its distinguished collections as well as securing its international reputation. Subsequently, as co-director-consultant at the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art, he engineered its division, thereby helping to create the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. From there, Valentiner led J. Paul Getty's early efforts to establish his museum before being persuaded in 1955 to become the first director of the North Carolina Museum of Art. He served here from 1956 until his death in September of 1958.

A renowned art historian in fields ranging from Italian Renaissance sculpture to seventeenth-century Dutch painting, Valentiner was unbounded in his pursuit of untraditional expressions of artistic élan. Among the first of America's art museum directors to recognize the aesthetic importance of African and pre-Columbian objects, he also was instrumental in bringing the art of the contemporary world to the attention of his colleagues and the public at large.

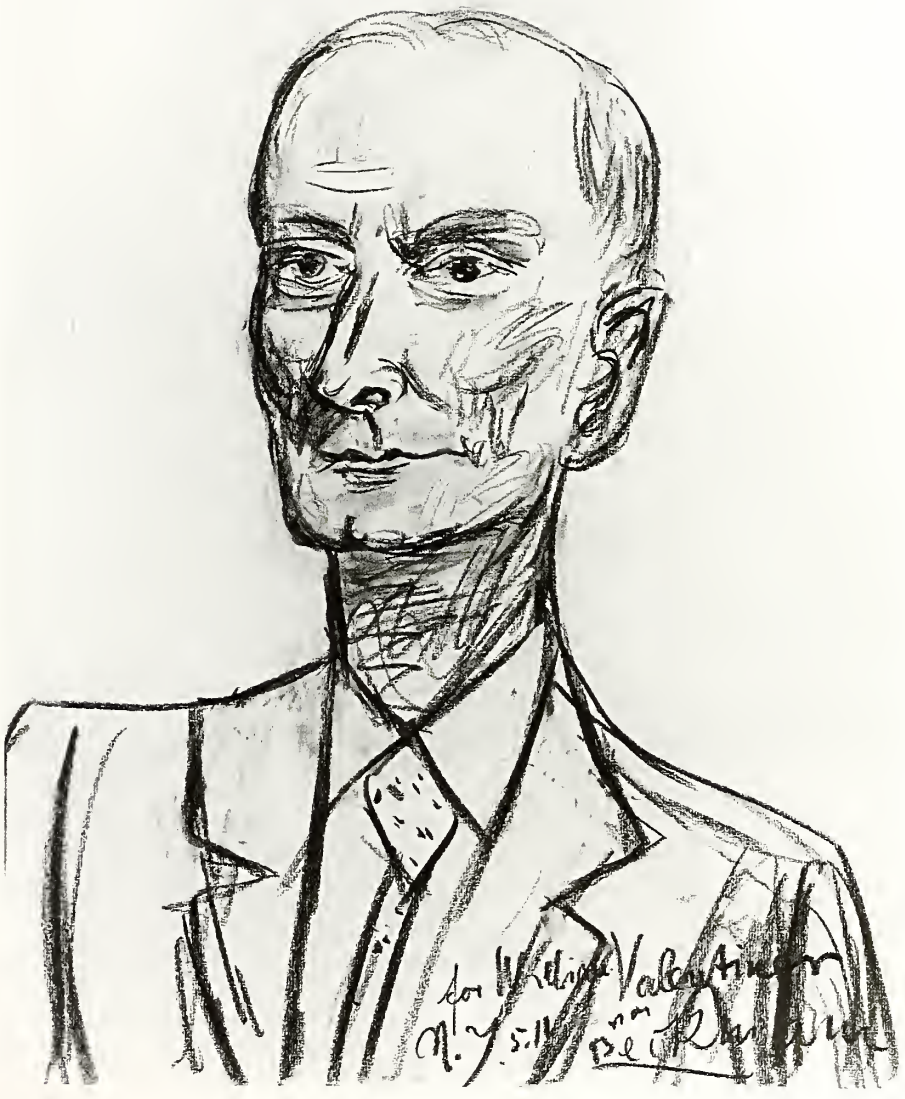
Following World War I, Valentiner deepened his friendships with the German Expressionists, began collecting their work, and made their achievements known through exhibitions and publications. In sponsoring the first show in America of German Expressionist paintings (at Anderson Galleries in New York in 1923), Valentiner facilitated the introduction of this new and dramatic point of view. In 1958, at this museum, he organized the first comprehensive exhibition of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in the United States. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff (whose woodcut portrait of Valentiner appears on page 50) rightly considered him the greatest friend the German Expressionists had.

The North Carolina Museum of Art benefits to this day from the high standards Valentiner set as director. The Museum benefits as well from his insight as a collector and his generosity as a donor. Fearing that regional attitudes would prevent the acquisition of twentieth-century art, Valentiner gave to the Museum paintings, sculpture, and works on paper by modern masters. (A selection of these works is pictured on pages 90–95. His donations, it should be noted, were not limited to this period.) Particularly noteworthy among these gifts are the German Expressionist works, and three articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* are devoted to German Expressionist paintings left to the Museum in the Valentiner Bequest: Kirchner's *Panama Girls*, Schmidt-Rottluff's *Portrait of Emy*, and *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape*, which came to us as an Otto Mueller, an attribution which has often been questioned and is here being overturned.

Additionally, the Valentiner connection has brought the Museum gifts in honor of this great and gentle man, offered by his friends, many of whose collections he helped shape. A fourth article focuses on such a gift, Lyonel Feininger's *The Green Bridge II*. The *Bulletin* also includes an essay on a seminal work in the Museum's collection, the triptych by Anselm Kiefer, a contemporary interpreter of the German experience. The Kiefer acquisition continues the tradition Valentiner established of promoting the art of one's own time, and, moreover, Valentiner funds (by exchange) helped pay for the painting.

There is much greatness which the community of America's — and the world's — art museums celebrates in the life of W. R. Valentiner. This museum in particular never tires of paying tribute to its first director. And the Valentiner name continues to inspire donors. Generous support from Alice M. Welsh, with additional assistance from the Beth and George W. Paschal, Jr., Fund, has allowed us to publish this somewhat expanded *Bulletin*, for which Associate Curator Huston Paschal served as curatorial coordinator. It is more than fitting that the issue be dedicated to the man, a scholar of enviable intellectual energy, who made possible, directly or indirectly, the acquisitions discussed in these five articles — and, incidentally, the man who in 1957 initiated this journal. We hope the scholarship of the *Bulletin*'s contributors — Timothy O. Benson, Jill Lloyd, Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, John Hallmark Neff, and Peter Nisbet — will stimulate spirited exchange among art historians, which in itself would further honor the memory of Valentiner.

Lawrence J. Wheeler
Director



Max Beckmann
German, 1884–1950, active in United States from 1947
Portrait of W. R. Valentiner, 1950
Charcoal on blue paper
22 7/8 x 17 5/8 in. (58.1 x 44.7 cm)
North Carolina Museum of Art
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.2

Fig. 1 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
German, died Switzerland, 1880 – 1938
Panama Girls, 1910 – 11
Oil on canvas
19 7/8 x 19 7/8 in. (50.5 x 50.5 cm)
North Carolina Museum of Art
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.30

Panama Girls: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and the Urban Cabaret

Jill Lloyd

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Panama Girls* (fig. 1) depicts a frieze of dancing cabaret girls caught in the middle of their act. The dancers are set in a shallow, flattened space, and their jerky movements are suggested by the syncopated rhythms of color and line. Above the central horizontal axis, planes of pink, red, and blue are punctuated by the vertical accents of the dancers' hands. In the background, decorative arcs, which are echoed by the oval forms of the pink dancers' hair, introduce another compositional movement. The bottom half of the painting is dramatically simplified: it is made up of interlocking diagonals of black, bird-like legs against a yellow-green ground. The two halves of the painting are linked by the dapper red canes held in the blue-jacketed dancers' hands.

Both the pictorial geometry and the artificial, mannequin-like presence of the dancers in *Panama Girls* predict Kirchner's later treatment of urban themes in his threatening Berlin street scenes. But the mood in this particular work comes closer to comic irony. Painted at the turn of 1910–11, *Panama Girls* is a transitional work, representing a summation of Kirchner's stylistic and thematic interests during the buoyant Dresden years and heralding his more sophisticated and troubled Berlin style.

From the earliest years of their association, the Brücke artists were attracted to the lively urban scene around them. Like the other founding members of the group, which was formally established in June 1905, Kirchner had trained as an architect in Dresden, and he made thumbnail sketches both of the city's attractive Baroque center and of the industrial landscape in Dresden-Friedrichstadt where the artists had their studios. It was here, in local bars and cafés, that they frequented variety shows, and by 1908, Kirchner — like the other Brücke artists Erich Heckel and Max Pechstein — began to draw and paint subjects derived from the cabaret and circus.

There were, of course, precedents for these subjects in French Post-Impressionist painting. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and Georges Seurat, for example, painted cabaret scenes with prostitutes, clowns, and bohemians — drifting people on the fringes of society who provided a metaphor for the status of the modern artist as an outsider. Kees van Dongen, a member of the Fauve group, was well-known for café-concert scenes that probably directly inspired the Brücke artists.[1]

1. Max Pechstein established contact with Van Dongen in Paris in 1908. That same year Van Dongen and other French Fauve artists exhibited alongside the Brücke artists at the Galerie Richter in Dresden.

Fig. 2 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Tightrope Walker, 1909
Oil on canvas
47 1/4 x 58 5/8 in. (120 x 149 cm)
Private collection

Indeed, cabaret and variety acts began in France and moved to Germany in the mid-nineteenth century, where they developed in two directions: the popular Tingeltangel and the high-class Variétépalast. The acts to be seen in both were varied, ranging from song and dance to comedians, acrobats, snake-charmers, magicians, and — after the British model — groups of women known as "sisters." Kirchner's dancers almost certainly belong to a group of this kind.

By the turn of the century, the cabaret had begun to attract the attention of many intellectuals and artists, who saw in its lively and popular status an opportunity for artistic reform. Otto Julius Bierbaum's 1897 novel *Stilpe*, for example, tells the story of a bohemian hero who founds a literary variety theater in the hope of renewing the relationship between art and life through the energy, free sexuality, and immediacy of the cabaret. Stilpe enthusiastically declaims his program:

> The Renaissance of all arts and the whole of life with Tingeltangel as a model! What is art today? A colorful glittering cobweb in the corner of life. We want to throw it as a golden net over the whole people and the whole of life. Then everyone will come to us in the Tingeltangel, they will flee the theaters and museums as anxiously as they flee the churches and we shall dance in a new culture.[2]

The Brücke artists would certainly have responded to the revolutionary spirit of Bierbaum's imaginary cabaret. Their own program, announced in 1906, called on "the youth of today who herald the future" to create "freedom in art and life in opposition to the well-established old forces."[3] In Kirchner's early paintings of cabaret subjects like *Tzarda Dancers* (1909) and *Tightrope Walker* (1909, fig. 2), bright planes of contrasting colors, animated compositions, and extreme gestures infuse them with a Nietzschean vitalism, a "coming-alive" of the image that is very typical of this phase of Brücke art. The recurrent motifs of high-kicking dancers and tightrope walkers, which appear in both Kirchner's and Heckel's cabaret and circus scenes, are also Nietzschean images. In Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* the tightrope walker is used as a metaphor of transformation in a similar way to the bridge (which had inspired the name of the Brücke group). In the same book, Nietzsche writes: "Lift up your hearts my brothers, high! higher! And do not forget your legs too . . . . You higher men, the worst about you is none of you has learned to dance as a man ought to dance — to dance beyond yourselves."[4]

2. Otto Julius Bierbaum, *Stilpe: Ein Roman aus der Froschperspektive*, 24th and 25th ed. (Berlin, 1927), 357, 359.

3. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Programm der Brücke*. Repr. in Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven, 1991), 15.

4. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883–85; Leipzig, 1923), 327–328. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* transl. (London, 1961), 301–302.

The Brücke cabaret scenes draw freely on these literary and philosophical associations. But they also reflect the real experiences of the artists. The postcards that they exchanged on an almost daily basis are a fascinating record of the history of cabaret in early twentieth-century Germany. Kirchner, Heckel, and Pechstein visited all types of cabaret venues, and their postcards refer to famous acts like the Albion Sisters, who performed at the Wintergarten, the Apollotheater, and the Passagetheater in Berlin, as well as to more obviously down-market performances where, as Kirchner comments, "the women are a bit rough."[5] Friends and models, like the black circus performers Sam and Milli who appear in photographs of the Brücke studios and several paintings of the period, were increasingly drawn from this milieu. The young cabaret dancer Siddi Riha, whom the artists met in Dresden in late 1910, later married Erich Heckel.

The Brücke artists also responded enthusiastically to the "exotic" nature of the cabaret acts they saw: *Panama Girls* is a case in point, as the title of the group suggests Latin American origins. Their postcards are peopled by Chinese jugglers (fig. 3)

Fig. 3 Erich Heckel
German, 1883–1970
Chinese Juggler on Stage, 10 May 1911
Pen and ink and colored crayon on postcard
3 1/2 x 5 1/2 in. (9 x 14 cm)
Altonaer Museum in Hamburg
Norddeutsches Landesmuseum

5. Postcard from Kirchner to Heckel, 8 January 1911, postmark Berlin (Altonaer Museum, Hamburg).

and Indian dancers; and several of Kirchner's paintings take up these exotic themes.[6] On one level, this reflects very directly a penchant for exotic acts: photographs in the popular press of the era frequently depict European girls posing as "Javanese" snake charmers (fig. 4) or "Egyptian" dancers.[7] It also coincides with Kirchner's growing interest in non-European art, which was stimulated both by visits to the Dresden Ethnographic Museum to see its rich collections and by more popular, ephemeral sources. In March 1910, for example, Kirchner wrote enthusiastically to Heckel:

> The Ethnographic Museum is open again. Just a small part of it, but this is a real enjoyment and a refreshment — the famous Benin bronzes and some things by the Pueblos from Mexico are still exhibited and some negro sculptures. A circus is here again and in the zoo Samoans and Negroes are coming this summer.[8]

Typically, Kirchner's emerging primitivism involved not just stylistic influences but also a romantic enthusiasm for primitive lifestyles, which was fired by the native "acts" staged in the zoos, circuses, and cabarets. This corresponded, in turn, to his Nietzschean quest for renewal and regeneration; and in this sense the primitive, exotic cabaret represented a potent mix. In *Panama Girls*, the frieze-like composition of dancers with their jagged, angular movements and gestures refers directly to a non-European source: namely, carved beams from the Micronesian island of Palau that Kirchner

Fig. 4 Makara, the "Javanese" snake charmer
Dresdener Illustrierte Neueste
January 1910

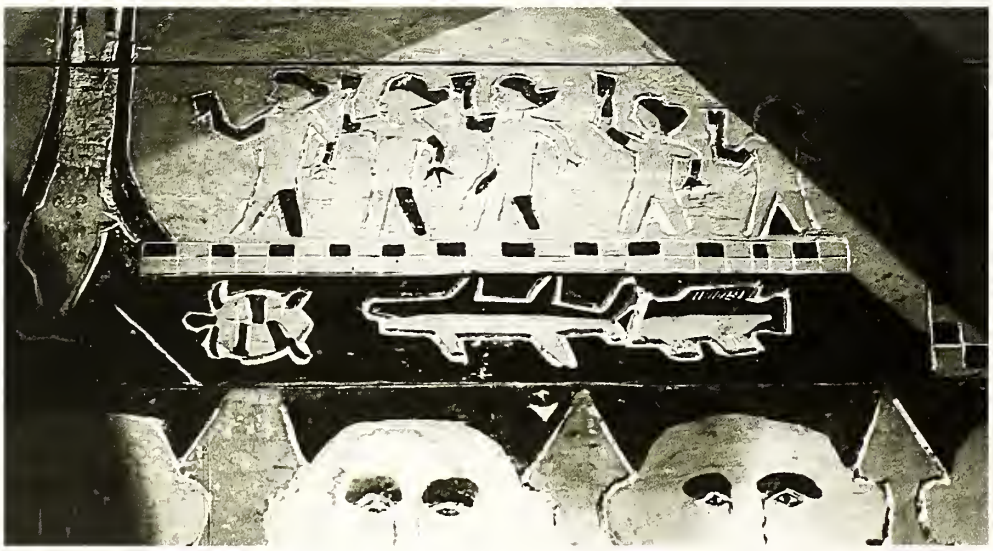


Fig. 5 *Clubhouse of Palau* (detail), 1907
Palau Islands
Carved and painted wood
39 ft. 4 3/4 in. x 14 ft. 5 1/4 in. x 16 ft. 1 in.
(12 x 4.4 x 4.9 m)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin — Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Museum für Völkerkunde
(VI 26 814)

6. For example, *Negro Dancer* (1909/1920, Gordon 74) and *Indian Dancer in a Yellow Skirt* (1911, Gordon 189v). Reproduced in Donald Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner* (Cambridge, 1968).

7. For example, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, 2, 3, and 9 January 1910 and 5 and 30 September 1910. Also *Dresdener Illustrierte Neueste*, 1 January 1910.

8. Kirchner to Heckel, 31 March 1910, postmark Dresden (Altonaer Museum, Hamburg). Kirchner refers to the Zirkus Angelo playing in the southern suburbs of Dresden in spring 1910.

Fig. 6 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Panama Girls, 1910
Pen and ink on paper
14 3/4 x 20 3/8 in. (37.5 x 51.8 cm)
Sammlung Buchheim

saw in the Dresden Ethnographic Museum (see fig. 5 for a related example) and sketched on a postcard to Heckel in June 1910.[9] Even the color scheme of the painting, with the black, bird-like legs of the dancers against a yellow-green ground, recalls the yellow and black vegetable dyes used by the natives of Palau to color their carvings.

These Palau beams, which were originally used to decorate men's clubhouses and depicted scenes from the daily life and mythology of the islands, were an important visual source for the Brücke artists. Carved in shallow relief, they relate in a very direct fashion to the artists' own woodcut carvings; and the overtly sexual subjects depicted on the beams, which include the myth of a native with a giant phallus penetrating women on a neighboring island, undoubtedly appealed to the young Expressionists, who regarded sexuality as a liberating force.

A preparatory pen-and-ink drawing for *Panama Girls* (fig. 6) includes exotic background decorations referring to another non-European source that played a central role in Brücke art: the Buddha-like figure and lotus-leaf forms recall the illustrations in John Griffiths's book, *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave – Temples of Ajanta, Khāndesh, India*, which Kirchner copied in 1911 (fig. 7) and which inspired several paintings by Kirchner and Heckel.[10]

In his drawing for *Panama Girls*, Kirchner plays off the exotic, curving rhythms of Ajanta against the spiky, angular style of Palau. Although the explicit references to Ajanta have disappeared in the painting, the compositional principles remain in the sweeping arcs behind the dancers, echoed by their hair, combined with the angular,

9. Postcard from Kirchner to Heckel, 20 June 1910, postmark Dresden (Altonaer Museum, Hamburg).

10. J. Griffiths, *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave – Temples of Ajanta, Khāndesh, India* (London, 1896–97). Erich Heckel's *Reclining Girl* (1909) and Kirchner's *Five Bathers at the Lake* (1911) are based on the Ajanta illustrations, which both artists consulted in the Dresden Central Library.

Fig. 7 Ajanta Cave 1. J. Griffiths, *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave – Temples af Ajanta, Khāndesh, India*, plate 6.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Twa Flutists and a Dancer, 1911
Graphite and pen and ink on paper
9 3/8 x 7 1/8 in. (24 x 18 cm)
Kirchner Estate

Musicians and a Dancer, 1911
Graphite, with color indications on recto, on paper
11 x 9 3/8 in. (27.9 x 23.8 cm)
Kirchner Estate

interlocking diagonals formed by their legs. *Panama Girls*, despite its jagged forms, also recalls the Ajanta illustrations in a more general sense, as the subject of dancing women occurs frequently in Griffiths's book. Kirchner's lithograph *Four Dancers* (1911, Dube 168) depicts exactly the same scene, but here the dancers as well as the background decorations are inspired by the curved style of Ajanta. In *Panama Girls*, the combination of the curving forms that appear in Kirchner's paintings of 1909 like *Tzarda Dancers* and *Tightrope Walker* and the angular geometry that came to dominate his Berlin scenes make it a transitional work in terms of the artist's stylistic development.

On the verso of *Panama Girls* (fig. 8), a fragment of an abandoned painting showing the bottom half of a women seated on a leopard stool, with legs splayed to reveal her sex, tells us more about Kirchner's primitivism. The stool is in fact a genuine African artifact from the Cameroons that was in Kirchner's possession and appears in a postcard sent by Kirchner to the collector and Expressionist scholar Gustav Schiefler on Christmas eve 1910 and in photographs of Kirchner's Berlin studio.[11] The fact that the stool appears after Gustav Schiefler's arrival from Hamburg to visit the Brücke artists in December 1910 may suggest that it came from Julius Umlauff's Institute for Ethnography in Hamburg, which housed the most important private collection of art from the Cameroons in Germany, and which supplied other Expressionist artists with African objects.[12] Another possible source was Heckel's brother Manfred, who was working as an engineer in German East Africa and visited Dresden in the summer of 1910. Other African objects — presumably presents from Manfred — including a Tanzanian mask and African textiles — appear in studio scenes at this date.

One such textile, which is preserved in the Brücke Museum in Berlin, features in a pair of paintings dated 1910 by Kirchner and Heckel, showing Siddi Riha with a painted, mask-like face. Indeed, Kirchner's *Nude with a Painted Face* also includes an overt depiction of Siddi's sex, and the appearance of the leopard stool in another painting of Siddi by Heckel, *Girl with Pineapple* (1910), suggests that the abandoned fragment on the verso

11. This stool is now in the Budner Museum in Chur, Switzerland, where tests have been carried out to confirm its authenticity. The photographs show Kirchner's studio at Körnerstrasse 45, Berlin-Steglitz (Photo Archive, Kirchner Estate, Ingeborg & Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern).

12. August Macke, who collected the ethnographic material for the *Blaue Reiter Almanach* in 1912 and began his collection of non-European art the same year, purchased objects from Umlauff. It is likely that Cameroon pipe figures in Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's possession by 1922 came from the same source and that the Cameroon figure he sketched on a postcard dated November 1909, postmark Hamburg (Altonaer Museum, Hamburg), was also seen at Umlauff's Institute. By 1913 Schmidt-Rottluff had acquired a similar leopard stool from the Cameroons that appears in photographs of his Berlin studio.

Fig. 8 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Verso, *Panama Girls* (fig. 1)

of *Panama Girls* is a painting from the same series, showing Siddi in the studio, which Kirchner painted after Schiefler's visit in December 1910. The associations among the "primitive" African stool, the exotic fruit (which was a gift from Schiefler to the artists), and the female nude with her blatant sexuality relate to the Brücke artists' notions of primitivism. They doubtless believed that the women, children, and black circus artists and dancers who appear alongside the primitivist decorations in their studios remained close to their instincts and were thus capable of the Nietzschean regeneration they desired. In nineteenth-century Darwinian theory, women, children, and non-European people were thought to be at a lower stage of evolutionary development, and by viewing their models as "primitive," the Brücke artists inverted rather than truly undermined the Darwinian criteria of their day, evaluating them in a positive rather than a negative light.

If the painting on the verso of *Panama Girls* was abandoned around Christmas 1910 and cut to a square format, *Panama Girls* was necessarily painted after this date. Given the preparatory stages of drawing and planning and the layers of oil paint in the finished work, it is unlikely that the painting would have been rushed through in the last days of the year. Although *Panama Girls* is dated 1910 in the Kirchner catalogue raisonné, there is a barely legible date of 1911 inscribed, in Kirchner's hand, on the lower right of the painting, which is undoubtedly correct.

Two sketches survive. The first is an undated outline drawing in pen and ink capturing the movements and gestures of the four dancers, presumably made during or shortly after the performance (fig. 9). The more fully worked pen-and-ink drawing depicting exotic decorations (fig. 6) was sketched on a slightly larger sheet of paper and signed and dated 1910. Kirchner not only elaborates the background in this preparatory drawing but also begins to consider the tonal relationships that recur in the painting by blacking in the dancers' hair and legs. The dancers in the painting are copied very faithfully from this drawing, although some decorative details of the costumes are omitted along with the exotic background scene. At the same time the square format of the canvas condenses the composition.

Fig. 9 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Twa Pairs af Cabaret Dancers (sketch for *Panama Girls*), circa 1910
Pen and ink on paper
Sheet 18 x 14 in. (45.7 x 35.7 cm)
Garton and Co., Wiltshire, England
Photograph by P. J. Gates (Photography) Ltd

The second preparatory drawing for *Panama Girls* (fig. 6) was used to illustrate the cover of the Expressionist magazine

Der Sturm, published by Herwath Walden in Berlin, which was an important forum for Expressionist art and a meeting place for the writers and artists of the movement.[13] Drawings of this kind, worked up in the studio from the raw material of sketches made on the spot in preparation for a painting, are rare during the Dresden years and are far more characteristic of Kirchner's Berlin street scenes, painted in 1913–14. At this stage Kirchner used drawings of precisely the same dimensions as the pen-and-ink sketch for *Panama Girls* to work out the compositional geometry of the paintings, which he later described in terms of the artist's traditional role: "It is the task of the artist after all to sift through the richness of nature and to order it anew, to reform it so that what is meant shines forth, clear and pure."[14]

The diagonals, horizontals, and verticals in the composition of *Panama Girls* make it an unusually geometrical painting for its date. The repetition of forms also heralds Kirchner's street scenes, although in *Panama Girls* this has more to do with a visualization of dance and the influence of the Palau beams than with the consciously borrowed Futurist devices we find in paintings like *Friedrichstrasse* (1914). The repetitions and geometrical stylizations in *Panama Girls* make the dancers appear like marionettes; yet there is not the same predatory, dehumanizing effect we find in paintings like *Five Women on the Street* (1913, fig. 10), which also depicts a group of women — in this case city prostitutes — set in a shallow, frieze-like space. Whereas these prostitutes stand in isolated pockets of space, looking in different directions, there is an intimate, even affectionate contact between the slightly comic couples in *Panama Girls*. Two of the girls, dressed as men, carry elegant red canes, and the couples seem to be setting out for a mechanical, bird-like walk in the park. There is certainly a sexual frisson in this coupling of women with women dressed as men; and it is worth remembering that, at the lower end of the scale, cabaret dancers and waitresses often doubled as prostitutes.

Fig. 10 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Five Women on the Street, 1913
Oil on canvas
47 1/4 x 35 3/8 in. (120 x 90 cm)
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne

In the summer of 1910, Kirchner had visualized a very similar composition to *Panama Girls*, depicting four figures with jerky, articulated movements, equally inspired by the visual example of the Palau beams, in his colored woodcut *Bathers Throwing Reeds* (fig.11). The compositions and the movements of arms and hands are so similar that *Panama Girls* could almost be described as an urban version of Kirchner's earlier depiction of primitivist bathers, set in the Moritzburg lakes outside Dresden, where the artists spent their summers sun-bathing nude and swimming in the lakes.

13. See *Der Sturm*, 29 April 1911. This was the first work by Kirchner to be published in Walden's magazine, although illustrations by Oscar Kokoschka, Max Pechstein, and Emil Nolde had been included before this date, and throughout 1911 many Brücke graphics were published. Kirchner's drawing for *Panama Girls* was presumably signed and dated for publication.

14. Kirchner to Carl Hagemann, 27 February 1937, postmark Davos, Switzerland. Quoted in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner 1880–1938*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1979), 68.

Fig. 11 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Bathers Throwing Reeds, 1909
Colored woodcut
7 7/8 x 11 3/8 in. (20 x 29 cm)
Brücke-Museum, Berlin

It was above all the experience of Moritzburg, which the Brücke artists first visited as a group in the summer of 1909, that opened Kirchner's eyes to the relevance of non-European art. In Moritzburg the artists lived the life of modern primitives, seeking, like the members of the numerous nudist colonies that sprang up in Germany at the time, regeneration through nature in the face of a fast-developing and industrializing modern world. When Kirchner returned to Moritzburg in the summer of 1910, he visualized his own experiences through the eyes, so to speak, of the Palau natives, depicting bathers and figures playing with boomerangs and bows and arrows in a fully fledged Palau style.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, when artists in France and Germany moved out of the cities to artists' colonies like Pont-Aven in Brittany or Worpswede near Bremen, the search for a "natural" alternative to the pressures of city life revealed a growing consciousness of the negative onslaught of modernity. It was the same impulse that drove Gauguin, and later the German Expressionist artists Max Pechstein and Emil Nolde on the eve of World War I, to journey to the South Seas looking for alternatives to modern Western life. There is no doubt that a dichotomy between artifice and nature exists in Kirchner's work as well: on the one hand, he depicts cabaret, circus, and street scenes, and on the other, idealistic visions of bathers merging with the natural world that surrounds them.

In Kirchner's case, however, the subjects set in the city and in the country are never simply black-and-white alternatives. After his move to the industrial metropolis of Berlin in 1911, we find more evidence of the negative, alienating effects of

city life. In his countryside paintings, now set in the Baltic Sea island of Fehmarn, Kirchner often depicts small figures in extravagant urban dress invading virgin nature. In the city, the "primitive" is no longer seen entirely in positive, regenerative terms, but rather as a savagery simmering beneath the thin veneer of civilization. The Berlin street scenes are illuminated by lurid natural colors like fluorescent green and shocking pink and peopled by tribes of masked, marionette-like figures.

This is in marked contrast to the Dresden years, when a vitalist, Nietzschean spirit animates both Kirchner's city and country themes. *Panama Girls* and *Bathers Throwing Reeds* both refer to the visual model of the Palau beams, and both relate to Kirchner's Expressionist desire to throw off the shackles of tradition and establish a more vital, spontaneous mode of existence, ruled by the forces of instinct. The urban cabaret, with its lively, unconventional acts, and the forests and lakes where the artists literally stripped off the trappings of civilization were both alternatives to the "well-established old forces." Yet in *Panama Girls*, for the first time, there is a shadow of a more compromising mood: their spiky primitivism also renders them artificial and marionette-like, rather than "natural." Although the effect is comic and ironic, it nevertheless heralds the paradoxical relationship between primitivism and modernity that Kirchner was to explore more fully in his Berlin street scenes.

Jill Lloyd, a freelance curator and writer, is author of *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity*.

PROVENANCE

W. R. Valentiner; to Valentiner Estate, 1958; to NCMA, 1965.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Mannheim, Germany, Kunsthalle, "Ausstellung des Deutschen Künstlerbundes," 1913; catalogue, no. 189 (or 107 or 108).

Beverly Hills, Paul Kantor Gallery, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner," 8 April – 3 May 1957; catalogue, no. 4.

Panama Girls (fig. 1), detail

Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, "E. L. Kirchner, German Expressionist," 10 January – 9 February 1958; catalogue, discussed 17, no. 12.

Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art, "Masterpieces of Art (Valentiner Memorial Exhibition)," 6 April – 17 May 1959; catalogue, no. 130.

Detroit, J. L. Hudson Gallery, "The W. R. Valentiner Memorial Exhibition," 18 November 1963 – 2 January 1964;catalogue, no. 20.

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Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art, "Celebration," 26 October 1974 – 5 January 1975; catalogue, no. 40.

Berlin, Nationalgalerie Berlin, Staatliche Museen, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner 1880 – 1938," 29 November 1979 – 20 January 1980, then traveling; catalogue, no. 109.

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Fig. 1 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
German, died Switzerland, 1880 – 1938
[previously attributed to
Otto Mueller
German, born Silesia (now Poland),
1874 – 1930]
Two Nude Figures in a Landscape, 1913
Oil with small additions of wax on canvas
47 1/2 x 35 1/2 in. (120.6 x 90.2 cm)
North Carolina Museum of Art
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.48

Two Nude Figures in a Landscape: A New Attribution

Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau

Two Nude Figures in a Landscape (fig. 1) is the title of a painting as spontaneous as it is expressive. W. R. Valentiner, the well-known museum director who emigrated to the United States from Germany, bequeathed it together with many other works of art to the three-year-old North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, with the understanding that it was a work by Otto Mueller. This bequest took place in 1958, the year of Valentiner's death, after a long life dedicated to art.

Valentiner's family challenged the bequest in court. Finally, in 1965, after protracted legal proceedings, the wishes of the deceased were fulfilled, and *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* was entered into the inventory book of the North Carolina Museum of Art as a work of the Brücke artist and professor of the Breslau Akademie Otto Mueller (1874–1930).

To this day, no one appears to have cast serious doubt upon the attribution by this outstanding connoisseur of not only classic Dutch art, but also the art of his own time. And even when misgivings were raised, any argument against the authorship of Mueller dissipated in the face of the deceased's authority as an art historian, which extended beyond his death and the generosity of his bequest.[1] This attribution can, however, no longer be maintained, as the painting in question, a landscape with two bathers, is quite clearly a work by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, painted in 1913 during his summer stay on the isle of Fehmarn in the Baltic Sea.

Two naked figures, searching for a path towards the steeply sloping dunes between rocks worn smooth by the sea, are seen from behind and at a slight angle. Only conjecture allows the viewer to distinguish between the girl on the right and the boy on the left, who is crouching in an extreme squat, balancing himself by swinging his arms out. The figure on the right, tall with a slim, elongated body, has taken a firm stand, higher up on two stone humps. Both bodies are tanned by the sun. The entire landscape is filled with a glistening, sun-soaked color.

The colors of the sand of the beach and the steeply sloping dunes as well as the naked bodies form a momentary unity in salmon pink, fractured by the broken contours circumscribing the naked bodies with their uniformly red-brown hair. The field of stones in the sand bank sloping gently into the sea and also the looming, sheer

1. Just recently, on 25 September 1995, James B. Byrnes, assistant director under W. R. Valentiner and later his successor at the North Carolina Museum of Art, responded to a question from the Museum as to whether he still favored Otto Mueller. "I am attaching a number of photocopies of graphics [by Otto Mueller]. . . . I feel these examples support my conviction that the Valentiner painting is unquestionably by Mueller painted circa 1919–1921." See correspondence in the *Two Nude Figures* curatorial file.

In a 1985 conversation between NCMA Curator Mitchell Kahan and Prof. Charles Haxthausen, the latter stated, as noted for the files by Kahan, "that earlier on, Mueller had been very influential on Kirchner and that it was possible that at this time, the influence had reversed, with Mueller working in a vein closer to Kirchner. [Haxthausen] felt that the painting was definitely Mueller and not Kirchner, but that it was atypical Mueller." See 2 April 1985 memorandum in the *Two Nude Figures* curatorial file.

"wall" the figures face are envisioned by the artist in tones of blue. In between, in protected valleys, reed-like, loosely fanned dune grass is growing. At the top of the canvas, reaching to the steeply sloping dunes, there is a faint impression in the clear and uncontoured green of a copse of hawthorne trees, tossed and bent by the wind, typical of rugged northern coastal landscapes.

The entire work gives the impression of hasty painting. The movement of the figures freezes for the fraction of a moment. Hectic brush strokes clearly set next to one another support this impression; the colors, mostly pink, red-brown, green, and blue, have been noticeably thinned by the artist, while the priming remains in part untouched.[2] The brush strokes follow the movement of the figures from left to right toward the dunes. Only a few lines both order and underline the contours of the barren landscape of sand, larger boulders, grass, and dunes. The painting is not signed, monogrammed, dated, or even marked.

In order to establish the authorship and possible dating, it is first necessary to locate the place where the painting was made. A review of the oeuvres of those artists who make likely candidates — here Heckel, Kirchner, and Mueller spring most quickly to mind — for comparable landscape motifs certainly includes the motif chosen by the artist for this painting. It is a piece of the coastline of the island of Fehmarn, not very far from the Staberhuk Lighthouse on its southeast point (fig. 2). If this assumption is accepted, then the possible times for the execution of this painting are limited to only the few years when the three artists visited Fehmarn: Heckel in 1912; Kirchner in 1908, probably 1910, and in 1912, 1913, and 1914; and Mueller in 1908 and 1913.

Fig. 2 Bay on the East Coast of Fehmarn
Photograph by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, summer 1913
Photograph courtesy Kirchner Museum Davos

Having traveled up from Dresden, Kirchner stayed on Fehmarn in the summer of 1908 with his girl friend of the time, Emy Frisch (who would marry Karl Schmidt-Rottluff ten years later), and her brother, Hans Frisch, a young poet and painter.[3] They lodged with Dora Hiss in the Villa Port Arthur, a house that has been slightly remodeled over

2. Examination report, NCMA Assistant Conservator Barbara Wojcik, July 1995: "The paint has a granular, slightly underbound consistency forming a porous matte surface. The application ranges from a thin, translucent wash to a thicker body paint often layered one overlapping the other."

3. Schmidt-Rottluff's *Portrait of Emy*, painted the year after he married Emy Frisch, is the subject of the following article in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

See Lucius Grisebach, "Ernst Ludwig Kirchner auf Fehmarn," in *Die Maler der Brücke* (Schloss Gottorf: Sammlung Hermann Gerlinger, Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesmuseum, 1995), 60ff., the best description of Kirchner's stays on Fehmarn up to now.

the years but still stands at Staakensweg 32 in Burg.[4] In June 1910, Kirchner is said to have again spent a few days at the Villa Port Arthur.[5] But as can be gathered from Kirchner's own words, he did not attach any importance to this stay on the island, and it cannot be clearly established which, if any, works he painted on Fehmarn that year, even with the help of the standard catalogue raisonné by Donald E. Gordon.[6] On the other hand, Kirchner's artistic production during his stay on Fehmarn in 1912, especially in 1913, and indeed in August 1914 shortly before the outbreak of World War I, is definitely much more extensive.

"As you well know, I was back at Fehmarn this summer after a 5 year break," wrote Kirchner (being somewhat vague about the number of years between visits) on 31 December 1912 in a letter to his collector and supporter, the district court director Gustav Schiefler in Hamburg. "I intend to go there again next year, the entire impression from the first stay has deepened, and I painted pictures there of absolute maturity, in as far as I can judge myself. Ochre, blue and green are the colors of Fehmarn; a wonderful coastline, sometimes with the richness of the South Seas, beautiful flowers with fleshy stalks."[7]

Some years later, probably in 1925 or 1926, Kirchner, who was by then living in Frauenkirch in Switzerland, reminisced about the importance of his time on Fehmarn: "From 1912 to 1914 I spent the summer months with Erna on Fehmarn. Here I learned to form the final unity between man and nature and brought to an end that which I had begun in Moritzburg. The colors became milder and richer, the forms more severe and more distanced from their natural form."[8]

It was probably at the beginning of July 1912, after attending the Sonderbund exhibition in Cologne, that Kirchner returned to the island. This time he rented a room from the lighthouse keeper Ernst Friedrich Lüthmann in Staberhuk, a little spot consisting of a few houses that still exists on the southeast coast of the island. Traveling with him were his new girl friend, Erna Schilling, and her older sister, Gerda, who earned her living as a dancer in the Berlin Varietés.[9]

Erich Heckel, who had planned the stay with Kirchner, traveled first to Hiddensee with Siddi Riha — at the time his girl friend and later his wife — and then visited his friends, as arranged, towards the end of their summer holiday on Fehmarn. Whether Gerda Schilling remained on the island with Kirchner and Erna until the end of August is not verifiable. Using the works produced and the chronology given by Gordon one can, however, at least guess at the who, how, and when of Kirchner's models on the stony beach or in the ocean under the lighthouse. Included among them were also Dora and Frieda, two of the eight children of the lighthouse keeper Lüthmann.[10]

By themselves, the colors and motifs of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* do not place it squarely among the works Kirchner created in 1912 on Fehmarn. The painting has, however, other convincing parallels with those works. There are clear and

4. Visit by the author to the island of Fehmarn in July 1994. Kind tips and a tour through the places where Kirchner stayed by Dr. Dietrich Reinhardt, chair of the E. L. Kirchner Verein, Fehmarn.

5. See *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner — Gustav Schiefler, Briefwechsel 1910 bis 1935/38*, ed. Wolfgang Henze (Stuttgart/Zürich, 1990), 61, letter 33, f. 1.

6. See Donald E. Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner* (Munich, 1968), and Annemarie and Wolf-Dieter Dube, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Das graphische Werk* (Munich, 1967).

7. See *Kirchner — Schiefler, Briefwechsel*, 61, letter 33.

8. Quoted in Eberhard W. Kornfeld, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Nachziechnungen seines Lebens* (Bern, 1979), 337; see also Grisebach, 60, f. 2.

9. See Grisebach, 60.

10. Valuable tip from Dr. Reinhardt, chair of the E. L. Kirchner Verein, Fehmarn.

comparable references to the picturesque place, for example, in *Small Fehmarn Coast Scene* (Gordon 249), in which the characteristic dune landscape near the lighthouse was first captured by Kirchner. Also comparable are, of course, the two paintings *Bather between Rocks* (Gordon 256) and the probably lost *Two Bathers, Fehmarn* (Gordon 266), in which Kirchner, as in the Raleigh painting, used a hurried method that freezes for a moment the extreme position of his two models romping on the beach.

The Stuttgart Fehmarn painting, *Striding into the Sea* (fig. 3, Gordon 262), perhaps the most splendid of the works Kirchner painted on Fehmarn in 1912, is also pertinent because of where and how it was made. The landscape, the strip of sand, the smooth rocks in the foreground, the steeply looming dunes, and the lighthouse in the background seem to anticipate *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape.* Moreover, the manner in which Kirchner depicts the grass, the way he works the curves and size of the rocks out of the sand with hatching, and the way he captures the posture of the models striding

Fig. 3 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Striding into the Sea, 1912
Oil on canvas
57 1/2 x 78 3/4 in. (146 x 200 cm)
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

parallel into the sea, with their arms extending slightly away from their bodies, bringing out their contours and flesh with parallel brush grooves: all these details are fundamental evidence of Kirchner's authorship.

"The forming of naked people in nature . . . ," wrote Kirchner in his Davos diary in 1926, "began in the Dresden period 1904–5, extended through the Berlin period and reached its provisional end with the large Fehmarn painting 'Striding into the Sea' and 'Three Bathers in the Waves.'"[11] (The latter [Gordon 356] was painted in 1913.) Only the range of colors in the painting *Striding into the Sea* (which, with the exception of the strongly violet-colored sky, largely reflect conventional notions) allows the slightest doubts as to Kirchner's authorship of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape*. However, the further development of Kirchner's painting during the winter of 1912–13 towards those superb Berlin street paintings, the further consolidation in the use of strong colors released from a naturalistic model, and the busy, nearly staccato brush strokes during the next stay on Fehmarn in the summer of 1913 dispel the last doubts about the authorship of this painting.

Kirchner, Erna Schilling, and probably Gerda[12] returned to the familiar rooms at Lüthmann's in Staberhuk at the beginning of the summer holidays in 1913. This time they were accompanied by Hans Gewecke and Werner Gothein, the only students who were interested in the MUIM-Institut — Moderner Unterricht in Malerei (Modern Lessons in Painting) — that Kirchner and Pechstein had founded in the late autumn of 1911 in their shared studio in Durlacherstrasse. Instead of Heckel and Siddi, the visitors to their summer residence this time were Otto Mueller and his wife, Maschka.

Fig. 4 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Four Nudes Under Trees, 1913
Oil on canvas
47 3/8 x 35 5/8 in. (120.5 x 90.5 cm)
Private collection

Compared to Kirchner's Fehmarn paintings of the previous year, the coastal landscapes he executed in 1913 are more filled with people.[13] Clearly identifiable more than once is Otto Mueller, who, when lying in the sun, as captured in the painting *Four Nudes under Trees* (fig. 4, Gordon 355), apparently did not wish to do without his hat, an attribute that had almost become his trademark.[14] Gewecke and Gothein were doubtless also available as models, as were possibly the two daughters of the lighthouse keeper.

Of particular relevance here are two of Kirchner's panoramic coastal landscapes, *Fehmarn Coast* (fig. 5, Gordon 330) and *Fehmarn Coast with*

11. See *Davoser Tagebuch*, ed. Lothar Grisebach (Cologne: DuMont, 1968), 82.

12. See Lucius Grisebach, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner 1880–1938* (Cologne: Benedikt Taschen Verlag, 1995), 93.

13. See Gordon, cat. nos. 345, 346, 350, 353, 355, 358, 359.

14. On Otto Mueller as "model" in Kirchner's works done around 1911 to 1914, see Gordon, cat. nos. 197, 285, 296, 300, perhaps 301, 302, 303, 355, perhaps 360, 388.

Fig. 5 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Fehmarn Coast, 1913
Oil on canvas
33 5/8 x 33 5/8 in. (85.5 x 85.5 cm)
Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt

Lighthouse (Gordon 325, Museum Schloss Gottdorf). Noteworthy are the unusually pink to red-brown sand beaches and dunes, contrasting starkly with the dune grass and trees above the dunes conceived in dark green, the sea modulating in various blue tones, and the rocks lying like islands in the sand.

Kirchner's powerful color mixture, perhaps unusual at first glance, can be glimpsed for the first time in *Still Life with Mask* (Gordon 218), painted in Berlin in 1911. This painting Gordon himself held to be a key work, not only because of the indication of a color mixture new for Kirchner, but also because of the first use of the facial forms, elongated or even distended, which were to become characteristic of him in the coming years.[15] The still "round" bodies of the Moritzburg bathers have been transformed, in the Fehmarn paintings of 1912 and especially of 1913, into tall, reedy, stiff figures. Gordon speaks of an extension and thinning of the human proportions of the figures,[16] although Grohmann had already drawn attention to their "stiff and conscious posture even when relaxing" and "the formation of a gracile ideal of beauty with small hips and shoulders"[17] (fig. 4).

As a precedent for the transparent, almost gouache-like painting method for *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* one can take among others the painting *Erna near the Sea, Fehmarn* (fig. 6, Gordon 316). Its very thinly applied paint and staccato parallel brush strokes are a special painting technique characteristic of a large number of works produced on Fehmarn in 1913.

15. See Gordon, 83.

16. See Gordon, 83.

17. See Will Grohmann, *E. L. Kirchner* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958), 60.

Fig. 6 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Erna near the Sea, Fehmarn, 1913
Oil on canvas
30 3/4 x 27 in. (78.2 x 68.6 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 7 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Red Nudes, 1913/1925
Oil on canvas
47 1/4 x 35 3/8 in. (120 x 90 cm)
Private collection

Grisebach makes a very good comparison with a "plumage, a consequence of fanned, thick brush strokes which fill the entire canvas."[18] One can also feel a certain closeness of this painting to *Red Nudes* (Gordon 347), produced at the same time, which Kirchner greatly reworked in 1925, changing it into "carmin red female nude[s] with the slim heads in front of the pink colored dunes" in a tropical flora by using the "tone of green to blue-violet in the middle of the glimmering pink"[19] (fig. 7).

It remains only to prove the distended bodies of the figures in the Raleigh painting as typical of Kirchner. And it is only in this context that Otto Mueller comes into consideration. However, a digression on the development of the two artists from their first meeting — on the occasion of the "Ausstellung von Werken Zurückgewiesener der Berliner Secession" in the Berlin Galerie Maximilian Macht in May of 1910 — to the time this work was painted will make all the more clear why *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* can only be by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.

Mueller, born in Liebau in 1874, had already moved from the Silesian province to Berlin in 1908, the same year that Max Pechstein moved there from Dresden. Whether Mueller and Pechstein met at the time is not known, but it certainly was possible, given their mutual interest in the Berlin Secession. Mueller had completed a lithography apprenticeship before attending the academies in Dresden and Munich around the turn of the century. Because of this training, his work up to 1910 is associated with the academically led art of the end of the nineteenth century rather than with the much more color-intensive, carefree, Fauve-like painting of the Brücke artists.

In the summer of 1908, Mueller and his wife, Maschka, together with Mara and Helene, two of his four sisters, and several other people, among them probably Ivo Hauptmann, also spent a few days, like Kirchner, on Fehmarn. The two artists were doubtless there at different times and with different interests in choice of motif. While Kirchner's interests during his first visit were directed towards the interior landscape of the island, the streets of Burg, and individual façades, Mueller stationed his models on sections of the coastline similar to those that would appear in Kirchner's works in the years 1912 to 1914. *Mara and Helene on the Shore* of 1908 (fig. 8), for example, belongs to a series of seven known paintings with similar motifs, all probably having the same section of the coast as background.

18. See Grisebach, 96.
19. See Grohmann, 62.

Fig. 8 Otto Mueller
German, born Silesia (now Poland), 1874–1930
Mara and Helene an the Share (Fehmarn), 1908
Oil on canvas
Present whereabouts unknown

A comparison with the paintings Kirchner executed on Fehmarn in 1908—for example, *Fehmarn Coast* (Gordon 40)—shows only that the styles of the two artists were still quite divergent and that Kirchner, as he said himself, had painted some of the Fehmarn paintings of 1908 with a spatula, while Mueller preferred conventional painting methods,[20] producing works balanced in composition and subject with assured style and well-trained technique.

In the intervening period up to 1910, the year in which Mueller struck up a friendship with the Brücke artists, his style must, however, have changed radically, because for them it was now self-evident that he was one of them;[21] and they invited him to participate in an exhibition that autumn in the Dresden Galerie Ernst Arnold. The works both artists produced, from 1910 to 1913 and subsequently, show at first glance points of comparison and related motifs. This is especially noticeable in Kirchner's *Three Bathers on the Shore* (fig. 9, Gordon 344) and Mueller's *Bathers*, also done in 1913 and probably also painted on Fehmarn (fig. 10). Even the common style and motifs of artists working closely and often daily together—like Kirchner, Heckel, and Pechstein at the Moritzburg lakes in the summer of 1910—leave room for individual characteristics. And certainly Heckel and Kirchner were much closer at the time. There never were such commonalities that might lead to confusion between Kirchner and Mueller (fig. 11).

Nonetheless, the noticeably overt elongation of the bodies—the thin arms and legs, the overly distended, slim feet, the slim joints of the models—that

Fig. 9 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Three Bathers on the Share, 1913/1920
Oil on canvas
27 5/8 x 31 1/2 in. (70 x 80 cm)
Private collection

Fig. 10 Otto Mueller
Bathers, 1913
Distemper on burlap
42 3/4 x 57 1/2 in. (108.5 x 146 cm)
Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster

20. See Kornfeld, 336.

21. Erich Heckel to Emmy Mueller, Otto's sister. See Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, *Otto Mueller* (Cologne: DuMont, 1993), 37ff.

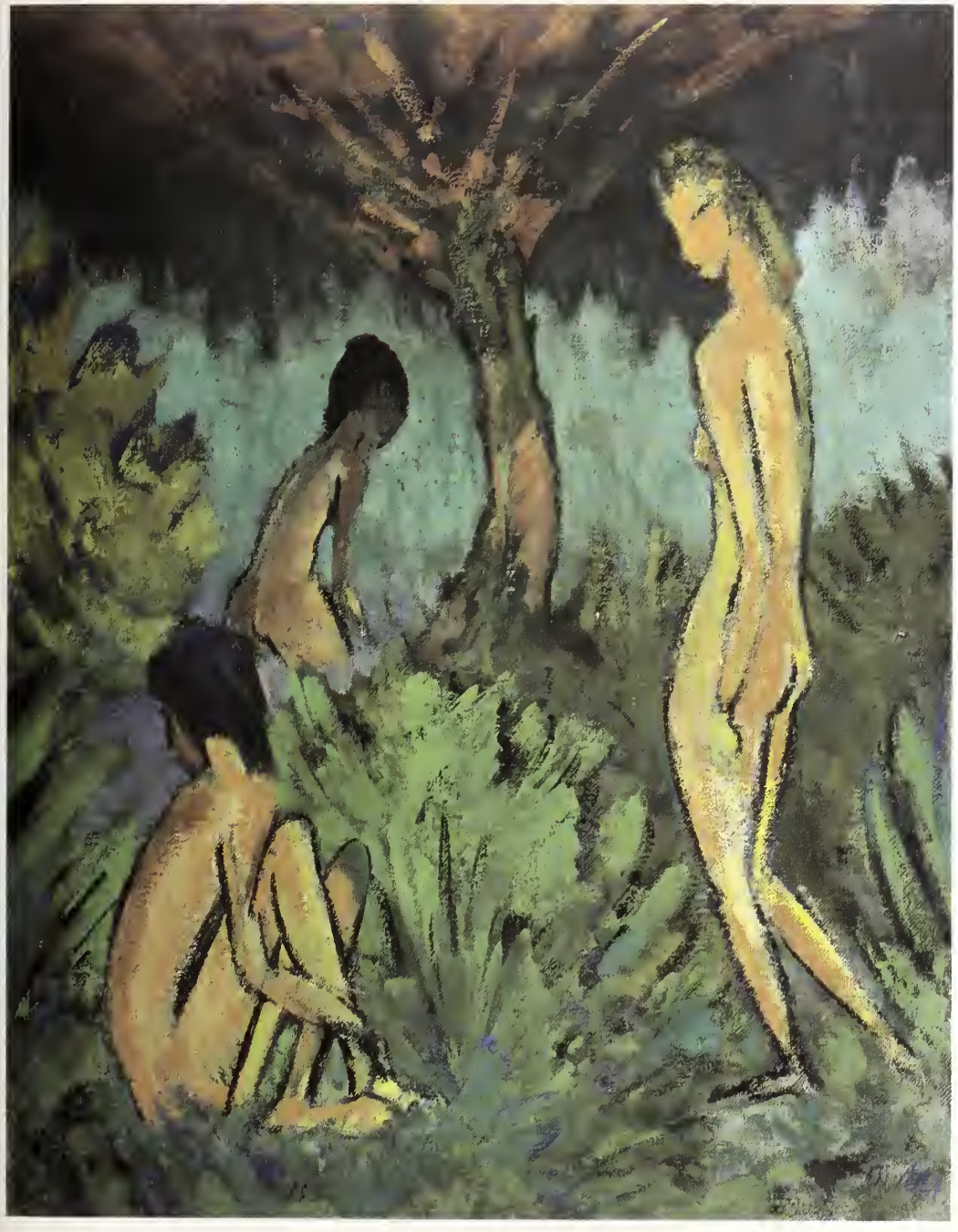

Fig. 11 Otto Mueller
Three Bathers, 1913
Distemper on burlap
46 1/8 x 36 1/4 in. (117 x 92 cm)
Private collection

started to appear in Kirchner's work from 1912 can be traced or at least related to Mueller's existing style. Mueller, however, unlike Kirchner, always paid attention to a well-proportioned rendition of his models, emphasizing their figures. The elongation of the very slim limbs corresponded to his quite sophisticated ideal of beauty, which included an understanding of the contours of the bodies as an unbroken line. Mueller retained his distinctive aesthetic to the end of his life.

Up to now this discussion has ignored Mueller's interest, after 1910, in the technique of distemper paint. *The Bathers* from 1910, in the Museum Folkwang, is one of the last works he painted with an oil-based medium or turpentine. The Berlin painting, *The Judgment of Paris*, also from 1910, is one of the first that he painted in distemper, a medium which he adopted from this time forth, probably exclusively, for his ever-coarser support — canvases of burlap or sackcloth. Characteristic of Mueller's distemper technique is a thick, full coloration that sought at the same time a dry dullness of the paint surface. Kirchner, on the other hand, still preferred oil paints for his ever-larger formats. These he greatly thinned, allowing a commingling of the applied paints and simultaneously a greater transparency and luminosity through the use of a sort of quickly drying watercolor technique.

This transparency, achieved by Kirchner in his Fehmarn paintings of 1913, for example, is impossible to generate using distemper paint. According to the technical examination and media analysis, *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* is composed of thin washes characteristic of oil paint, and the medium is an oil-wax mixture reportedly employed by Kirchner, not an aqueous-based medium such as the distemper typically used by Mueller since approximately 1910.[22] For all these reasons taken together, an attribution of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* to Otto Mueller, assuming it was painted on Fehmarn in 1913 — and everything seems to indicate this — can no longer be supported.

Because of the almost complete lack of dating of the works of Mueller, his paintings of 1913 can only be ordered by arguments of motif and style. As far as the time with Kirchner on Fehmarn is concerned, there is certainly a degree of correspondence. The elongated bodies of the models, for example, doubtless arose originally from a detailed study by Mueller of the work of the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, who lived in Paris, and whose work Mueller saw, at least in original, for the first time in Berlin in 1911. Motifs such as nude bathers on the beach or in the woods were de rigueur at the time for all artists working in natural surroundings. However, extreme, unproportioned, if not unfavorable postures such as that of the figure crouching on the left of the Raleigh painting are almost never to be found in Mueller's work, neither in his lithographs nor in his watercolors or paintings.

For Kirchner, on the other hand, to capture such a contorted posture was a means of buttressing the spontaneity he desired. The same crouching posture is to

22. Since the examination done by Barbara Wojcik (see n. 2), additional studies including media analysis have been carried out on *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape*. See Addendum to Wojcik Report by NCMA Associate Conservator William Brown, 7 April 1997, and Analytical Examination Report (WACC #97-AS-418) by James Martin, director of analytical services and research, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Williamstown, Massachusetts, in the painting's curatorial file. See also the 1963 letter from Kirchner student Chris A. Laely, in the Museum of Modern Art, Department of Painting and Sculpture: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner Collection File, in which Laely discusses Kirchner's use of an oil-wax mixture; and see the conservator's note at the conclusion of this article.

be seen in a number of his works (for example, in *Two Green Nudes with Red Hair* [fig. 12, Gordon 92] or *Bathers in Moritzburg* [Gordon 93]). It appears as well in Kirchner's decoration of his studio walls, first in Dresden and then later in his Berlin residence. The photographs Kirchner made give the impression of a spontaneous, sketchy narrative independent of his pictorial decision to decorate the walls and fabric hangings with erotic fantasies (fig. 13).

When Mueller, after some consideration — and doubtless at the instigation of Kirchner — produced a decorative frieze in 1911–12 (fig. 14), the well-proportioned figures, varied in their movements, display that elongated, slim, ideal figure that would influence Kirchner, gaining its true meaning in his works of 1912 and 1913. In a comparison of the two artists' studios, the differences between them become evident: Kirchner's nervous, restless, mistrustful, ambitious nature on the one hand, and on the other, the patient, level-headed, composed Mueller.

Fig. 12 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
Two Green Nudes with Red Hair, 1909/1926
Oil on canvas
29 1/8 x 19 3/4 in. (74 x 50 cm)
Private collection

Now that the authorship, place, year, and medium of production have been clearly demonstrated, it only remains to try to reconstruct the circumstances of this work's persistent attribution to Mueller and to account for why a clarification of this problem is only now being attempted.

On 10 January 1958, an exhibition in honor of Kirchner opened at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. The catalogue, with three color and otherwise black-and-white reproductions, lists forty-three paintings, twenty-three watercolors and drawings, thirty-two woodcuts, a few lithographs and etchings, and two silver clasps — about 100 works, up to that time the most extensive individual exhibition of the most important Brücke artist to take place in the United States. That this exhibition took place in Raleigh, and not in New York or Chicago, is due to the interest of the director of the museum, W. R. Valentiner (1880–1958).

Valentiner, born in Karlsruhe in 1880, studied history and art history at Heidelberg under, among others, Henry Thode, by all accounts an arch conservative. In 1905 Valentiner received his doctorate in Heidelberg for his dissertation on Rembrandt. After working as an assistant to Hofstede de Groot for two years in The Hague, where he was able to continue his study of Dutch painting, Valentiner was made assistant at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum by Privy Councillor Wilhelm von Bode, the general director of the Berlin museums. In 1908, on Bode's recommendation, Valentiner was made curator of decorative arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York — and thus, one can guess, became the Berlin

general director's connection in the United States, which proved its worth the next year with an exhibition of German contemporary art in Boston, for which Bode acted as commissioner.[23] At the outbreak of the war in 1914, Valentiner was in Germany and, because he was still a German citizen, entered the army.

After the war Valentiner lived at first in Berlin as a scholar. He became a passive member of the November Group and began to develop a deeper interest in the works of the German Expressionists. Included among Valentiner's publications was the paper "Redesigning Museums in the Spirit of the New Times," which brought with it further intensive contact with Wilhelm von Bode and which, among other things, reacted to the intense discussion that Bode was already leading about the old and redesigned buildings of the Berlin museum island.[24] Valentiner also published monographs on the young sculptor Georg Kolbe and the Brücke painter Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, the first two publications in Klinkhardt and Biermann's increasingly respected series Junge Kunst.

In 1921 Valentiner returned to the United States as adviser to the Detroit Institute of Arts. In 1924 he became the Institute's director, a position he held for twenty years. In spite of having reached retirement age, in 1946 Valentiner was named co-director-consultant at what was then the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art. In 1952, he was given the task of organizing J. Paul Getty's extensive and heterogeneous collection, which was located in a specially purchased country house in Malibu.[25] And in 1955, at the age of seventy-five, Valentiner moved for a last time, on being named founding director of the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. He died on 5 September 1958. The following year, in Valentiner's memory, the Raleigh museum opened "Masterpieces of Art," an exhibition that told of the rich life, between the old continent and the new, of this internationally active museum director and looked back on his important purchases, mediations, gifts, and scholarly achievements.

Fig. 13. Interior of Kirchner's Dresden studio
Photograph by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1910
Photograph courtesy Kirchner Museum Davos

Two paintings by Kirchner from the Valentiner estate were included in this exhibition: the 1910 *Panama Girls* (Gordon 161) that would later become the property of the museum[26] and the 1937 *Landscape of Frauenkirch* (Gordon 1013), one of the artist's last paintings. One searches the catalogue in vain for *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape*. However, listed in the catalogue is *Two Bathing Girls* by Mueller, probably painted at the beginning of the 1920s, which came to America as part of the exhibition "German Painting and Sculpture" organized by Alfred H. Barr at the Museum of Modern Art in 1931 and which was probably purchased by Valentiner at the time of the exhibition. The

23. "Exhibition of Contemporary German Art" ([Boston]: The Copley Society of Boston, Copley Hall, 1909); see Angelika Wesenberg, "Zur Förderung der deutschen Kunst. Bode als kunstkritischer Anonymus," in: *Wilhelm von Bode als Zeitgenosse der Kunst zum 150. Geburtstag*, ed. Angelika Wesenberg (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1995), 83.

24. See Stephan Waetzoldt, "Wilhelm von Bode—Bauherr?" in Wesenberg, 55ff.

25. See *Handbook of the Collections* (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1991), 7. The present-day Getty Museum was built in Malibu in the 1970s. See *Lebensbilder aus der Familie Valentiner zwischen 1830 und 1979*, ed. Elisabeth Paatz née Valentiner (Heidelberg, 1976), 73 ff. and Eberhard Roters, *Galerie Ferdinand Möller: Die Geschichte einer Galerie für Moderne Kunst in Deutschland, 1917–1956* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1984), 56.

26. *Panama Girls* is the subject of the preceding article in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

Modern exhibition was made possible by the important contact that Alfred Barr established, through Valentiner, with the Berlin dealer Ferdinand Möller, who found the majority of the loans or made paintings available from his own gallery, including the Mueller work. Today it hangs in the Berlin Brücke Museum.

All this, however, does not explain how *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* came to be in Valentiner's possession. This still remains a mystery. More significant or even disturbing is the question of how the knowledgeable museum director was able to make such an attribution, an attribution that was then uncritically accepted by his colleagues.

In retrospect, the circumstances cannot be completely fathomed. Valentiner not only knew the work of Kirchner very well; he was also responsible, as director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, for the first American Kirchner exhibition. According to Will Grohmann, Kirchner's first biographer, Valentiner had great respect for Kirchner even before World War I. And in Berlin after the war he had become more familiar with Kirchner's works. Kirchner wrote in his Davos diary on 11 August 1919: "We [Kirchner and the German painter Karl Stirner] are writing to Valentiner and Neumann."[27] Valentiner might also

Fig. 14 Interior of Mueller's Berlin studio
Photograph by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, 1911 or 1912
First published in *Brücke-Chronik*, 1913

27. See *Davoser Tagebuch*, 56.

have seen a rather atypical work of Kirchner's, the 1911 *Garden Restaurant in Steglitz* (Gordon 211), in 1913 in New York in the legendary Armory Show, the first important exhibition of modern art in America. Moreover, shortly before Valentiner left Berlin in 1921 for the Detroit Institute of Arts, he could have seen Kirchner's one-person exhibition of about fifty works, which had opened in February in the Berlin Kronprinzenpalais.

In 1923, the first American exhibition of German Expressionist work after World War I took place in New York in the Anderson Gallery with the close cooperation of the Berlin Galerie Ferdinand Möller. The foreword to its catalogue was written by Valentiner. From Mueller there were, apart from five watercolors and four lithographs, five paintings mistakenly described as "oil." From Kirchner, on the other hand, there was not one work, which was doubtless due to the lack of business contacts between the Galerie Möller and Kirchner at the time, and to the existing range of the Berlin gallery. Valentiner therefore had the best of opportunities to study the works of Mueller. "The gracious, rhythmic and delicate forms of Mueller have a ready appeal," Valentiner wrote, and not much more, on the subject in his catalogue foreword.[28]

Only in 1926, with the "Carnegie International," was a Kirchner work once again seen by the audience on which he placed such importance. This was followed by Alfred Barr's "German Painting and Sculpture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1931, and then by the Kirchner exhibition in 1937 at the Detroit Institute of Arts.[29]

During the preparation of this exhibition, at the beginning of September 1936, Valentiner finally came to know Kirchner personally. Coming from Italy, where he had been visiting the publisher Kurt Wolff in Venice, Valentiner made use of the opportunity to visit Dr. Bauer — family doctor, faithful friend, and a collector of Kirchner works — in Davos and then Kirchner himself in Frauenkirch, in order to ask for works for the Detroit exhibition. Kirchner was more than pleased at this visit, recognizing in it the chance of finally becoming established in America. On 7 September 1936, Kirchner wrote to Valentiner: "Dear Doctor: I want to thank you very much again for the interest and time you spent in seeing my works."[30] Seven days later, after Valentiner had written and asked for further information on his works, Kirchner wrote again: "It was a great pleasure for me to go through the paintings with you. In accordance with your wish, I have quickly made a few more photographs, and I am going to send them to you in care of Kurt Wolff in Florence . . . . A thousand thanks that you will try to find friends for my pictures."[31] In November 1936 he sent the shipment to Detroit: five paintings, sixteen watercolors, twelve woodcuts, and five etchings.[32]

The exhibition opened in Detroit in January 1937. Kirchner asked Valentiner for reviews and received photographs and newspaper clippings. The German dealer Curt Valentin, who had just arrived in New York, was successful in scheduling the

28. See *Catalogue for the Exhibition, A Collection of Modern German Art*, intro. by W. R. Valentiner (New York: The Anderson Galleries, 1923), 7.

29. On the exhibition of Kirchner's works in America, see Frank Whiteford, "Kirchner und das Kunsturteil," in *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1980), 38ff.

30. E. L. Kirchner to W. R. Valentiner, 7 September 1936, quoted in *E.L. Kirchner, German Expressionist*, exh. cat. (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1958), 39.

31. Quoted by Valentiner, 40. Kurt Wolff was a publisher in Munich. Will Grohmann's book *Das Werk Ernst Ludwig Kirchners* was published by his company in 1926.

32. See Kornfeld, 310.

exhibition for his new gallery. It was shown in October of the same year, supplemented by further works from Kirchner himself, nine months before Kirchner's suicide.[33] (And in 1939, the Museum of Modern Art purchased its first work by Kirchner, *The Street* [Gordon 364] of 1913, which had been in the Nationalgalerie, where it was confiscated by the National Socialists and sold for hard currency.)

In the letters from Kirchner to Valentiner that were published in the exhibition catalogue of 1958—the American's response has not been found—two passages demonstrate how well-founded Valentiner's knowledge of Kirchner and his work had become. On 4 April 1937, Kirchner asked Valentiner for information about the location of two of his paintings that had become very dear to him. In the letter, he included "two photographs of paintings from the Hess collection at Erfurt. The one reproduced a Fehmarn painting of which I am very fond, 'Bathing on the Beach'; and the second one, a street scene."[34] In the same letter, Kirchner announced to Valentiner, who had become his "agent" in the United States, that he would receive under separate cover a package of twenty-five drawings, "'a sketch book of E. L. Kirchner 1901–1936,'" that would provide "a short view of the formal development of my art at this time. I ask you to accept this little book in appreciation and respect. You have been so infinitely kind and friendly to me and make [*sic*] me very happy to know of your interest in my work."[35]

Valentiner worked very hard to smooth Kirchner's introduction to the United States. He helped ease what were, at the beginning at least, tense relations with Alfred Barr and with the German gallery owner Curt Valentin, who had also visited Kirchner in Frauenkirch in 1936 and was active in New York for the Berlin Galerie Buchholz. Kirchner placed great hopes on the exhibition in New York in 1936, which included not only the works shown in Detroit, but also seven paintings "of a smaller size," shipped by Kirchner directly to New York. "I hope that the subjects are interesting to the Americans. There are, among others, two sporting paintings in which I try to express in art the movements of the athletes. My thanks go to you most heartily if you can help me with this exhibition."[36] One of the two, the 1934 *Hockey Players* (Gordon 976), was later purchased by Valentiner for his private collection for a price of $300.[37] Probably a large majority of the Kirchner works that Valentiner owned were listed in the catalogue of the Raleigh Kirchner exhibition of 1958: five paintings, nine watercolors and drawings from the sketchbook, and two woodcuts.[38]

In the catalogue of that exhibition, Valentiner wrote: "From the artificial atmosphere of the street scenes and circus performances, we are guided into the open, unspoiled nature in the compositions which the artist executed on the small island of Fehmarn in the Baltic Sea, where he spent his summer months (1912–14). Here he continued his early efforts to represent nude bodies in an out-of-doors setting, and the

33. See Kornfeld, 312.

34. Quoted in Valentiner, 43. Alfred Hess owned, according to the valuable information of Andreas Hüneke, nine paintings by Kirchner: *Houses at Fehmarn* (not in Gordon) as well as the following works listed in Gordon: 263, 319, 323, 363, 368, 360, 370, 383; the work mentioned by Kirchner, *Bathing on the Beach*, cannot be demonstrated to have been part of the Hess collection, but can perhaps be related to *Nudes in the Forest* (Gordon 263).

35. Quoted in Valentiner, 44.

36. See Valentiner, 44 and 45.

37. See Kornfeld, 321.

38. See *A Collection of Modern German Art*, 55ff., especially the note, "Lent by Private Collector, Raleigh."

different colors of light green — the color of the dunes — of blue, and a warm red show how relieved the artist felt after he had left the city atmosphere behind him."[39] Valentiner obviously knew works of the Fehmarn period, not least the painting *Red Nudes*, which Kirchner had not sold in spite of numerous offers, as he himself held it to be an important work. Kirchner could have shown it to Valentiner during his visit there. Moreover, Valentiner devoted an entire chapter to his meeting with Kirchner, lasting memories which he first put to paper in 1940. Valentiner described his visit to Kirchner's house, the conversations he had there, and the impression he gained of an artist seemingly anxious and depressed.[40] One can read Valentiner's great consternation at Kirchner's fate; one can even feel the accusation of not himself having been more active in his support.

In consideration of all this, it becomes more difficult to understand how the attribution of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* to Mueller could have originated with Valentiner.

How did the painting come to be in the possession of Valentiner? There is the possibility that Kirchner could have presented this work to Mueller as a reminder of their time together on Fehmarn. If that had been the case, then Kirchner certainly would have signed this work as a gift to his friend. And if Mueller had then sold this work to Valentiner, he would never have claimed the work to be his own. Nothing is known about this or any other possible gestures of friendship between Kirchner and Mueller. On the other hand, if Mueller had painted the work under discussion, he would certainly have signed or at least initialed it with his well-known "OM."

Among the many possibilities of how the "Kirchner" came, via Valentiner, to be in the North Carolina Museum of Art as a "Mueller," there should be considered the relationship between Valentiner and the Berlin Galerie Ferdinand Möller. After World War I, probably at the beginning of the 1920s, Valentiner got to know the art dealer Ferdinand Möller, who lived in Breslau and was orienting his business toward Berlin. Valentiner's contacts in the United States were of great interest for Möller. The exhibition of German contemporary art in October 1923 at the Anderson Gallery in New York included about 270 works from twenty-nine artists, part of the Galerie Ferdinand Möller's permanent stock. Among them were many works by the Brücke artists — with the exception of Kirchner — especially works by Schmidt-Rottluff, Nolde, and Mueller. Valentiner, apart from writing the foreword to the exhibition catalogue (entitled "A Collection of Modern Art"), worked on contacts with American collectors, while Möller procured the art works and concluded the loan and sales contracts.[41]

From these commmon interests there arose a friendship, on which, with the rise of National Socialism in Germany, unconventional demands were placed. In October 1937 and in March 1938, Ferdinand Möller shipped crates containing twenty

39. See Valentiner, 22.

40. See Valentiner, 31ff.

41. See Roters, 56.

paintings from his gallery to the Detroit Institute of Arts with the request that they be stored there. Included were works by Otto Dix, Lyonel Feininger, Vasily Kandinsky, Max Pechstein, Christian Rohlfs, and Schmidt-Rottluff, as well as two early works by Mueller, *Landscape with Bathers* from 1911 and *Couple with Green Fan*, probably from 1912. The *Self-Portrait* by Otto Dix was acquired by Valentiner for the museum. The rest of the paintings remained loans for regular use.[42] After the war — Valentiner had since left Detroit for California — Galerie Ferdinand Möller managed to get back all of the stored works with the exception of two works by Feininger[43] and Kandinsky.

We can certainly demonstrate Valentiner's knowledge of the works of both Kirchner and Mueller from their different periods. Given his involvement with the careers of both artists, it is all the more surprising that Valentiner could make such an attribution. (This attribution may be the reason that Donald E. Gordon did not take the work into consideration. He may never even have seen the work during his research for the Kirchner catalogue raisonné, which appeared in 1968.)

How Valentiner came to be in possession of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* can no longer be reconstructed today. In the painting's file in the North Carolina Museum of Art is only the simple fact that the painting is from the Valentiner estate. Tradition has it that Valentiner acquired the work directly from the artist.[44] This assumption cannot be unequivocally disproved. However, there are no reports of Valentiner's ever having met Mueller, as he had Kirchner, and even Valentiner's and Mueller's common interest in the November Group in Berlin — Mueller was one of the founding members — does not provide any definite grounds for assuming an acquaintance.[45] That the Raleigh painting could have come into Valentiner's possession along this path therefore remains unverifiable. It is, however, very unlikely.

There does exist, of course, the possibility of an acquisition through a gallery — the Galerie Ferdinand Möller, or later the Galerie Nierendorf, which was in Cologne and then in Berlin and towards the end of the 1930s in New York as well, or the Berlin Galerie Buchholz, represented by Curt Valentin in New York. Possible, too, is the Frankfurt gallery owner Ludwig Schames, who interested himself in Kirchner's works from 1916 on, or other such sources. Neither Valentiner's known correspondence with Ferdinand Möller nor with other colleagues makes any reference to such a purchase.

However, the absence of a signature on the painting allows the following conjecture. Especially for Kirchner's sense of self — and this is naturally true of Mueller as well — it is unthinkable that a work would leave the studio unsigned, unless it was in the period when Kirchner was, because of illness, seldom in Berlin and Erna Schilling had authority to send works to exhibitions and to take care of business affairs. (If this were the case, *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* could only have left the Berlin studio from around

42. See Roters, 155ff.

43. See the article on Feininger's *The Green Bridge II* in this issue of the *Bulletin*, esp. p. 68.

44. See 5 July 1995 letter summarizing the museum tradition from NCMA Associate Curator Huston Paschal to the author in the *Two Nude Figures* curatorial file.

45. Roters, 56; Mueller signed the founding paper of the November Group. In the publication *Die Novembergruppe* by Helga Kliemann (Berlin: Gebr. Mann-Verlag, 1969) Valentiner is not even mentioned as a passive member. See also Paatz.

1916 until it was closed in 1921.) The lack of overpainting on *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* strengthens this argument, for Kirchner had begun to restore or overpaint the large majority of works (such as *Red Nudes* or *Three Bathers on the Shore* [figs. 7 and 9]) that he had taken with him to Davos because of damage in shipping.[46] The fact that the provenance of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* cannot be ascertained does not raise any doubts, however, about Kirchner's authorship of this spontaneous Fehmarn work of 1913. For *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* is consonant with Kirchner's numerous Fehmarn works, full of picturesque and exotic bathing scenes on the Baltic Sea beach below the lighthouse of Staberhuk.

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Thanks: My dearest gratitude belongs to my colleague Huston Paschal at the North Carolina Museum of Art for answering many irksome questions; many thanks as well to Dr. Anna Jolly for her great assistance in combing the archive at the Detroit Institute of Arts for documents. Finally, I would like to thank David Higgins for his translation and all friends and colleagues for their spontaneous opinions about this painting, which underlined my attribution of the work to E. L. Kirchner.

46. Valuable tip from Dr. Wolfgang Henze, Wichtrach/Bern; See also Hans Bollinger, "Lebensdaten," in *E. L. Kirchner, Zeichnungen*, Roman Norbert Ketterer and Wolfgang Henze, eds. (Stuttgart and Zürich: Belser Verlag, 1979), 241.

Regarding the technical examination and media analysis referred to in note 22:

Even though the media analysis of *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* identified oil and wax, this information alone should not be used to attribute the painting to Kirchner. We do not know enough about Mueller's materials and techniques, nor do we really know what was on the artist's palette or the extent of cross-influence between the two artists. A comparative study (see Brown addendum and WACC #97-AS-418 cited in note 22) between *Two Nude Figures in a Landscape* and a signed Kirchner oil painting in the NCMA collection, *Young Shepherd with Flower*, dated 1918 (and reproduced on page 93) found many similarities in technique and media, notably the oil-and-wax medium, but there were also significant differences.

William Brown
Associate Conservator

PROVENANCE

W. R. Valentiner; to Valentiner Estate, 1958; to NCMA, 1965.

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Two Nude Figures in a Landscape (fig. 1), detail

Fig. 1 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
German, 1884 – 1976
Portrait of Emy, 1919
Oil on canvas
28 5/16 x 25 3/4 inches (71.9 x 65.4 cm)
North Carolina Museum of Art
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.58

Fig. 2 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Self-Portrait with Hat, 1919
Oil on canvas
28 7/8 x 25 5/8 in. (73.3 x 65 cm)
© The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996
Bequest of William R. Valentiner
1965.440

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's **Portrait of Emy**: A Moment of Transition

Timothy O. Benson

In one of the first published descriptions of Karl Schmidt-Rottluff's *Portrait of Emy* (Emybildnis, fig. 1), W. R. Valentiner described the shifting of moods across the sitter's face as if it were a landscape:

> The eye of the girl with the propped up hand in the picture shines like the full daylight sun. But it is not the sun of naive cheerfulness that rose in this face, but rather that which radiates from the clouds after a thunderstorm still half overcast, half with stark clarity. Dark seriousness imbues one part of the face, the small stroke of the mouth, the shadows of the cheeks, an almost closed eye; but the rays of a strenuously fought spiritual self-enlightenment break out victoriously from the clear blue pupil of the other eye, surrounded by a dazzling nimbus. And the colors — the yellow and orange of the face, the blue-green and brown of the dress — express the struggle between vision and reality, between the here and now and the beyond; but it is as if the red flames surrounding the form promise the victory of the spiritual.[1]

Valentiner penned this description for the first monograph on the artist, which was published scarcely a year after *Portrait of Emy* was painted. He had just recently met Schmidt-Rottluff, possibly during the interval of social turmoil that ensued as World War I drew to a close, when they were both members of the Berlin Working Council for Art (Arbeitsrat für Kunst). This group of vanguard artists, architects, and writers sought to align their creative activities with the aspirations of social reform of the more politically radical soldiers' and sailors' soviets that had sprung up in Germany when its government dissolved in October 1918.

Valentiner's erudite interpretation of the portrait goes beyond capturing the complex mood of calm and disquiet of the sitter to discover in it the artist's psyche during the following summer when he was struggling to regain his equilibrium as an artist. By then the political disruption and cultural devastation of the war and subsequent revolution were giving way to the relative stability of the Weimar Republic, and Schmidt-

1. Wilhelm Valentiner, *Schmidt-Rottluff*, Junge Kunst series no. 16 (Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1920). Valentiner's text was also printed in "Karl Schmidt-Rottluff," *Der Cicerone* 12, no. 12 (June 1920): 455–476.

Rottluff had found his way once again to the remote Baltic village of Hohwacht, where he had made so much progress before the war.[2] Now he regained his artistic course with such paintings as *Portrait of Emy* and its pendant, *Self-Portrait with Hat* (Selbstbildnis mit Hut, fig. 2).

Soon thereafter the two paintings were acquired by Valentiner and thus became consequential for the introduction of Expressionism in America. Ironically, their interpretation in Germany would first epitomize Expressionism and subsequently represent the fate of vanguard culture under the totalitarian conditions of the anti-modernist Nazi state, as will be seen below.

Schmidt-Rottluff felt uneasy as he returned to painting in 1919. This was conveyed in a despondent postcard he sent from Hohwacht to his first and perhaps most important champion, the art historian and collector Rosa Schapire (1874–1954). In the postcard he expressed such dissatisfaction with his progress that he feared that the summer's work might be for naught.[3] In a letter to another important supporter, the art historian Wilhelm Niemeyer (1874–1960), he wrote that he was in a melancholy mood, still burdened by his war experiences and only able to "win back" some of his "faith in color."[4]

That this small claim of victory was an understatement is clearly born out in *Portrait of Emy*. Color — in both its discovery and suppression — had already played an essential role in Schmidt-Rottluff's career. He first embraced color just before he cofounded the Dresden Brücke group in June 1905 with Ernst Ludwig Kirchner and Erich Heckel, his fellow architectural students at the technical college in Dresden.[5] He began with the Neo-Impressionist divisionism of Seurat, as seen in an early colored-pencil drawing signed "Karl Schmidt."[6] (Rottluff, the name of the town near Chemnitz where he was born in 1884, was added to his signature after the founding of the Brücke group.)

After the Brücke members had seen an influential Vincent van Gogh exhibition at the Galerie Arnold in Dresden in November 1905, Schmidt-Rottluff departed from local color (as had Van Gogh) to incorporate the raw emotional power of arbitrary color into the open facture of the brushwork of his oil paintings, an approach that became even more assured during the following summer, which he spent with Emil Nolde on the Baltic island of Alsen.[7]

By 1910–11 he had evolved the broad planes of bright hues that marked his radical departure into Expressionism in landscapes and in such portraits as *Portrait of Rosa Schapire* (Bildnis Rosa Schapire, 1911, Brücke Museum).[8] His use of highly charged color lingered until 1915, when his interest in volumetric forms, Cubist fracturing, and "primitivizing" references to West African masks culminated in a series of melancholy portraits of stylish women. His colors became subdued in the reserved Cubist palette of darker browns, reds, and greens (shared to some extent by Heckel) of *Woman with Purse*

2. Leopold Reidemeister, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Ausstellung zum 100. Geburtstag des Kunstlers* (Berlin: Brücke Museum, 1984), 28. With the outbreak of the war and the coincidental death of his father, Schmidt-Rottluff had returned to Rottluff, his hometown. Gerhard Wietek, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff in Hamburg und Schleswig-Holstein* (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 1984), 36.

3. Postcard from Schmidt-Rottluff to Rosa Schapire dated 22 July 1919, in Gerd Presler, *"Brücke" an Dr. Rosa Schapire* (Mannheim: Städtische Kunsthalle, 1990), 69. Schmidt-Rottluff had met Schapire in May 1907.

4. Schmidt-Rottluff to Wilhelm Niemeyer, 28 August 1919, in Wietek, *Schmidt-Rottluff in Hamburg*, 62. Peter Selz also sees *Portrait of Emy* as a testament to the war, "fraught with tragedy, due to the pensive pose, and primarily the frightening round left eye which seems to float disembodied in front of the model's face." Peter Selz, "Art in a Turbulent Era: German and Austrian Painting Re-Viewed" in *German and Austrian Expressionism: Art in a Turbulent Era*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1978), 19.

5. Armin Zweite, "Schmidt-Rottluff vor Schmidt-Rottluff: Einige Anmerkungen zur Genese seines Frühwerkes" in Gunther Thiem and Armin Zweite, eds., *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Retrospektive*, exh. cat. (Bremen: Kunsthalle, 1989, published by Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1989), 16.

6. The drawing, entitled *Country Road in the Springtime* (Landstrasse im Frühling, private collection), is reproduced in Thiem and Zweite, no. 13, plate 1.

7. For further discussion of Van Gogh's influence on the Brücke group, see Magdalena M. Moeller, "Van Gogh and Germany" in *Vincent van Gogh and the Modern Movement: 1890–1914*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Museum Folkwang, Essen and Van Gogh Museum, published by Luca Verlag, Freren, 1990), 312–408.

8. Magdalena M. Moeller and Hans-Werner Schmidt, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff: Der Maler*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle, published by Hatje,

Fig. 3 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
June Evening, Hohwacht, 1919
Oil on canvas
34 1/8 x 39 3/8 in. (86.5 x 100 cm)
Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf im Ehrenhof

Fig. 4 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Verso, *Portrait of Emy* (fig. 1)
Photographed under infrared light

(Frau mit Tasche, 1915, Tate Gallery) and *Woman Putting on Glove* (Handschuhanziehende, 1915, private collection). At this point, the war interrupted Schmidt-Rottluff's progress.

When he resumed his painting in 1919, the subdued palette of 1915 persisted in such oils as *June Evening, Hohwacht* (Juniabend Hohwacht, fig. 3). He also continued to explore volumetric forms and "primitive," mask-like heads in his drawings, as is seen also in the rapid sketches of his postcards to Schapire.[9] This direction is extended in the head portrayed on the verso of *Portrait of Emy*, a composition the dissatisfied Schmidt-Rottluff later tentatively began to paint out in the rusty brown color he apparently applied to recycle his canvases (fig. 4).[10] Still visible are shades of blue similar to other works of 1919 such as *Girl Combing Her Hair* (Kämmendes Mädchen),[11] while the face and outlined lips resemble the faces in *Women Outdoors* (Frauen im Grünen, private collection, Düsseldorf).[12] Perhaps his dissatisfaction resulted from difficulties in organizing the tightly compressed space, as he had departed from the solutions offered by the angular style of such prewar paintings as *Flowers in Vase (Dahlias)* (Blumen in Vase [Georginen], 1914, Kunsthalle, Bielefeld), where the perspective is also extremely steep.[13]

His solution in *Portrait of Emy* was atypical. He eliminated the background altogether and presented the figure tightly bound by the rectilinear format so that she seems to burst forward from the picture frame. Whereas the backgrounds in Schmidt-Rottluff's 1915 paintings had contained objects and spatial references, *Emy*'s background has now become an ambiguous color field that begins to merge with the image itself. The mask-like countenance of Emy may continue his interest in "primitive" sources; but the image is entirely transformed (and, in terms of volume, defeated) by this return to color.

Stuttgart, 1992), no. 19, p. 63; cf. no. 17, p. 59.

9. See Presler, 48, 49, and 73.

10. The verso of his *Still Life* (Stilleben, reproduced on p. 95) in the North Carolina Museum of Art collection (65.10.59) is covered with a similar brown pigment. Beneath it is a landscape with villa visible with infrared photography. I am grateful to Barbara Wojcik of the Museum's conservation department for showing me both Schmidt-Rottluff paintings under infrared conditions.

11. Reproduced in Moeller and Schmidt, 111.

12. Reproduced in Thiem and Zweite, no. 202, plate 70.

13. Reproduced in Thiem and Zweite, no. 105, plate 40.

After an intense immersion in wood carving during the war years, when conditions prevented him from painting, Schmidt-Rottluff now attempted to transcribe natural appearances in the autonomous formal language of painting. The results impressed Ernst Gosebruch (1872–1953), the director of the Essen Kunstsammlung, who remarked the following year about the works produced during the summer of 1919: "with unshakable belief we see the high fulfillment, the festive crowning of the work of our friend."[14]

The ostensible subject of *Portrait of Emy* is the artist's wife, the Chemnitz-born photographer Emy Frisch (1884–1975). Highly compatible with this socially withdrawn painter, she was described by art dealer Günther Franke as one who seemed to participate in conversations in silence.[15] She had become acquainted with the Brücke artists through her brother Hans, a poet and writer who had known Kirchner when they were both youths in Chemnitz. When Hans became one of the Brücke group's earliest "passive members," Emy also developed close ties with the artists and had a brief romantic liaison with Kirchner beginning in 1907 and ending during the summer of 1908, when she accompanied him on his first trip to Fehmarn. Kirchner produced portraits of both Hans and Emy—the former in a woodcut and an oil painting, the latter in several etchings, a lithograph, several paintings, and various gouaches and drawings.[16]

Emy remained within the inner circle of the Brücke's communal life style (an intense blending of art and life) as the group gradually began to move from Dresden to Berlin when Max Pechstein relocated his studio there in 1908.[17] At this point

Fig. 5 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff with Emy Frisch, Rosa Schapire, and Schmidt-Rottluff's sister Gertrud in Hohwacht, Holstein, summer 1919

14. Ernst Gosebruch, "Schmidt-Rottluff" in *Genius* (1920): 12, cited in Thiem and Zweite, no. 201, p. 258.

15. See Thiem and Zweite, 107, n. 47, and Doris Schmidt, ed., *Briefe an Günther Franke: Porträt eines deutschen Kunsthändlers* (Cologne: DuMont, 1970), 202.

16. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: 1880–1938*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1980), no. 9, p. 111. See also the ink and crayon postcard drawing of Emy and Hans Frisch in Annemarie Dube-Heynig, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner: Postkarten und Briefe an Erich Heckel im Altonaer Museum in Hamburg* (Cologne: DuMont, 1984), 33.

The woodcut is Dube H121; the oil painting Gordon 33; the etchings Dube R20 and R24; the lithograph Dube L65; and the paintings Gordon 34, 35, and 39; cf. the etching Dube R40. The catalogue raisonné references are to Annemarie and Wolf-Dieter Dube, *E. L. Kirchner: Das graphische Werk*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Munich: Prestel, 1980) and Donald E. Gordon, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner* (Munich: Prestel, 1968).

17. See, for example, the postcard of 28 November 1909 to Heckel from Pechstein's Berlin studio signed by Pechstein, Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff, Emy and Hans Frisch, Lotte Kaprolat (the future Mrs. Pechstein), and a Lotte Frdl. (who has not been identified in Brücke scholarship) as well as Kirchner's letter of December 1909, where he refers to the "family" in Berlin. In Dube-Heynig, 50, 62-69, 226-232.

Fig. 6 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Bay in Moonlight. 1914
Woodcut
15 1/2 x 19 1/2 in. (39.4 x 49.5 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for
German Expressionist Studies

Schmidt-Rottluff and Emy had established only a cordial relationship, using the formal rather than familiar form of address in their correspondence.[18] While he made a letterhead design for her photography studio in 1914 and designed her visiting card,[19] only in 1915 did Schmidt-Rottluff make his first portrait of her.[20] They were married in March 1918 when the artist returned from military service.[21]

During the summer of 1919, Emy and Schmidt-Rottluff's sister Gertrud joined the painter in Hohwacht, where he had journeyed in late spring (fig. 5). Both Emy and Gertrud appear as figures meditating or strolling along the sandy Baltic shores in pictures dating from this time, most notably *June Evening, Hohwacht* (fig. 3). Will Grohmann later wrote of such "romantic" landscapes that, in contrast with the paintings on the same subject of 1914, there is "between man and nature no opposition, and the breadth of the landscape, which includes the heavens, allows creation to breath."[22]

In 1919 Schmidt-Rottluff also portrayed Emy and himself in two versions of the painting *You and I* (Du und Ich) and in *Double-Portrait* (Doppelbildnis).[23] Her features appear also in the 1920 paintings *Girl* (Mädchen, Städtische Kunstsammlungen, Chemnitz) and *Heath and Moon* (Heide und Mond, Sprengel Museum, Hanover).[24] In these later pictures Schmidt-Rottluff pursues the abbreviation of description already seen in *Portrait of Emy* and allows his forms to transcribe visible reality as a pictorial "equivalent," much along the lines Carl Einstein described with relation to non-Western art in his 1915 book *Negerplastik* — its illustrations a possible source for Schmidt-Rottluff's wartime wood carvings based on African prototypes.[25]

Nature increasingly reduced to signs — arbitrary and autonomous forms that are used to construct the picture tectonically rather than in imitation of natural appearances — had been an important discovery in both Schmidt-Rottluff's paintings and his graphics (especially in his woodcuts) as early as 1914. In *Bay in Moonlight* (Bucht im Mondschein, fig. 6) nearly interchangeable striated forms become "equivalents" for rocks, foliage, and dunes. While less abstract, the series of paintings of nudes amid dunes or foliage of 1913 presented figures and environment in an arabesque of color and line, as

18. Gerhard Wietek, *Schmidt-Rottluff: Oldenburger Jahre*, 1907–1912 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 384 and 411.

19. Rosa Schapire, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluffs graphisches Werk bis 1923*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Euphorion, 1924), Gebrauchsblätter nos. 35 and 38.

20. *Portrait of E. F.* (Bildnis E. F., location unknown), Will Grohmann, *Karl Schmidt-Rottluff* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956), 289, reproduced on 261.

21. Information on Emy Frisch is scarce. The most authoritative source is Wietek, *Oldenburger Jahre*, see 196, doc. 134, n. 7. The birth date for Emy Frisch more commonly given in the literature is 1883. Cf. Grohmann, 85, 94, and 309.

22. Grohmann, 98.

23. *You and I* (private collection) is reproduced in Thiem and Zweite, no. 211, plate 73. The other version is in the Staatsgalerie moderner Kunst in Munich. *Double-Portrait*, formerly in the collection of Markus Kruss, is reproduced in Grohmann, 263.

24. *Girl* is reproduced in Moeller and Schmidt, 117; *Heath and Moon* is reproduced in Thiem and Zweite, no. 217, plate 72. Emy was also the subject of a 1919 woodcut, *Portrait of Emy* (Emybildnis, Schapire 252) and an etching (Schapire 48). See *Verzeichnis der Graphik von Karl Schmidt Rottluff*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Galerie Ferdinand Möller, 1922), nos. Gr. 599/1923 and Gr. 1818/213. Schapire 252 (woodcut version) is illustrated in Gerhard Wietek, *Schmidt-Rottluff Graphik* (Munich: Karl Thiemig, 1971), no. 113, p. 159.

25. On art as an "equivalent" see Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weissen Bücher, 1915), p. xx. On Schmidt-Rottluff's use of the illustrations in this book as source material see Donald Gordon, "German Expressionism" in William Rubin, ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 393. As Shulamith Behr points out, Rosa Schapire probably introduced Schmidt-Rottluff to *Negerplastik*, having written a review of it in 1915. See Shulamith Behr, "Anatomy of the Woman as Collector and Dealer in the Weimar Period: Rosa

Fig. 7 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Imperial Coat of Arms, 1919
Woodcut
19 1/2 x 15 1/2 in. (49.7 x 39.4 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for
German Expressionist Studies

may be exemplified in *Three Nudes* (Drei Akte, National Gallery, Berlin).[26] By 1919 Schmidt-Rottluff had incorporated gestural variations of arbitrary lines and color patches into his paintings.

At about the time *Portrait of Emy* and its companion piece, *Self-Portrait with Hat*, were painted, Schmidt-Rottluff was experiencing success not only artistically, but economically as well. The Expressionists were being swept up in a postwar boom in the art market, while their reputations were being codified within the developing canon of modern German art. Their public careers had been sustained during the war only with considerable difficulty by stalwart supporters such as Schapire (whose own collection made possible an unprecedented Schmidt-Rottluff graphic show sponsored by her Frauenbundes [Women's Association] in the Hamburg Kunsthalle in 1918)[27] and the enterprising Munich bookseller and art dealer Hans Goltz (1873–1927), who featured Schmidt-Rottluff in a show in July 1917 with a catalogue by Schapire.[28]

After the war and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II (and with this the end of his patronage of cultural officialdom and academicism) the new parliamentary government began to accommodate Expressionist art just as it was becoming highly salable to a more liberal bourgeois class. Indeed some of the new patrons, such as the wealthy shoe manufacturer Alfred Hess (1879–1931) in Erfurt, had themselves been changed by war experiences similar to those that had been so devastating to Max Beckmann, Kirchner, and many other Expressionists. Hess avidly collected Expressionism, while representing the German Democratic Party in the city parliament and financing construction of low-cost housing.[29] As early as 1918, he began to support the acquisition of Expressionist works (including those of Schmidt-Rottluff) by Erfurt's Anger Museum under the direction of his principal artistic adviser, Edwin Redslob. Walter Kaesbach continued this program when Redslob departed in 1919 to take the position of Federal Arts Commissioner (Reichskunstwart) — a post that allowed him to commission Schmidt-Rottluff to design a woodcut of the German eagle coat of arms (fig. 7).[30]

It was during this boom in collecting and scholarship that Valentiner began to make his contribution to the understanding and dissemination of Expressionism. His broad knowledge of art history had had its beginnings in Berlin years earlier when he

Schapire and Johanna Ey" in Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West, eds., *Visions of the "Neue Frau": Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (Hants: Scolar Press, 1995), 96-107. Schapire's "Carl Einstein: *Negerplastik*," appeared in *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde*, n.s., vol. 7, no. 5/6, Supplement, Col. 243, reprinted in Carl Einstein, *Materialien* 1, "Zwischen Bebuquin und Negerplastik," ed. by Rolf-Peter Baacke (Berlin: Silver and Goldstein, 1990), 104. Schmidt-Rottluff's first explorations of African sources occurred around 1913, when his interest in Cubism may have drawn him to the Neue Galerie in Berlin for an exhibition of Picasso's work that included African sculpture. See Gunther Thiem, "Das Archaische als Stilprinzip in Karl Schmidt-Rottluffs Schaffen von 1911 bis 1918," *Pantheon* 53 (1995): 133.

26. Reproduced in Thiem and Zweite, no. 128 and plate 56.

27. In June 1916 Schapire founded the Frauenbund zur Förderung deutscher bildenden Kunst (Women's Association for the Support of German Visual Art) in Hamburg. Among other projects, the group acquired Expressionist paintings for various museums. See Maike Bruhns, "Rosa Schapire und der Frauenbund zur Förderung deutscher bildenden Kunst" in Henrike Junge, ed., *Avantgarde und Publikum: Zur Rezeption avantgardistischer Kunst in Deutschland, 1905–1933* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992), 273-274, and Behr, "Anatomy" in Meskimmon and West, 98-99.

28. On Goltz's career see Katrin Lochmaier, "Die Galerie 'Neue Kunst—Hans Goltz' in München" in Junge, 103-110.

29. Mechthild Lucke, "Der Erfurter Sammler und Mäzen Alfred Hess" in Junge, 149.

30. Discussed in *Kunst und Künstler* 19, no. 2 (November 1920): 75; *Vorwärts* 36, no. 506 (3 October 1919); and *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 54, no. 26 (26 January 1920). Valentiner had also been among those under consideration for the post. See Joan Weinstein, *The End of Expressionism: Art and the November Revolution in Germany, 1918–1919* (University of Chicago Press, 1990), 86.

was an assistant to Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929), director of Berlin's Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum.[31] Although he had been absent from Berlin while serving as curator of decorative arts at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1908 to 1914, as one of two curators then at the museum he was widely responsible for its growing collections (while also advising such private collectors as J. P. Morgan) and made annual summer study and purchasing trips to Europe. In 1914 Valentiner had been caught unexpectedly in Germany by the outbreak of World War I and chose to enlist in the German army. After brief service in the field (by coincidence, Franz Marc was his instructing officer and the impetus for his contacts with Bernhard Kohler's collection of contemporary art in Berlin),[32] Valentiner's social connections and language skills secured him a position in the War Information Center in Berlin. The guests he invited to weekly luncheons at his flat during this time testify to the extremely wide range of his social contacts: Professor Otto Hoetzsch (a conservative nationalist), Andreas Hermes (minister of finance in 1923), Marie Sarre (wife of Islamicist Friedrich Sarre, Valentiner's one-time superior at the Berlin museum), Princess Mechthild Lichnowsky (an early collector of Marc and Kokoschka), and the cultivated industrialist (and eventual founder of the Democratic Party and secretary of state) Walther Rathenau.[33]

At the war's end Valentiner, as a member of the Business Committee (Geschaftsausschuss) of the Working Council for Art (Arbeitsrat für Kunst), came to know Expressionist artists, architects, and writers. Among the committee's other members were artists Heckel, Pechstein, and Schmidt-Rottluff, as well as architects Walter Gropius and Bruno Taut.[34] Valentiner actively campaigned for signatures for the group's manifesto, succeeding, for example, with his curatorial colleague Carl Georg Heise (1890–1979) but failing with the poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926), who hesitated to sign anything he had not himself written.[35]

Valentiner's views on the role of the artist and the museum played a significant role in the group's deliberations about a reformed social order oriented around a new "great architecture" of spiritually inspiring communal buildings. With art patron Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874–1921), architectural critic Paul Zucker (1889–1971), and others, he published various proposals (under the Working Council's auspices) for a "new type of museum" that would display the works of living artists in a rural setting (with resort facilities) intended for the edification of the working classes.[36] These proposals caused considerable public controversy when they were sent by the Working Council to the Prussian Ministry for Science, Art, and Education of the provisional government.[37]

By contrast, Schmidt-Rottluff was a reluctant participant in the Working Council, requiring constant urging on the part of Gropius.[38] Schmidt-Rottluff's description of an ideal architectural project in a questionnaire the group circulated and published with members' responses reads more like a description of a painting.[39] And while he

Fig. 8 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Untitled drawing for Bruno Taut's visionary "House of Heaven," 1919
Dimensions unknown
Osthaus Archiv, Hagen

31. Margaret Sterne, *The Passionate Eye: The Life of William R. Valentiner* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1980), 70–78.

32. See Eduard Plietzsch, "In Memoriam Wilhelm R. Valentiner" in *North Carolina Museum of Art Bulletin* 3 (1959), 49, and Valentiner's own recollections in Klaus Lankheit, *Franz Marc im Urteil seiner Zeit* (Cologne: DuMont, 1960), 61–66.

33. Sterne, 117. Rathenau's father, Emil, founded AEG. See Stefan Pucks, "Walther Rathenau als Kunstsammler" in Junge, 253-259.

34. For the structure of the Arbeitsrat, see the 1919 pamphlet that was sent to artists, government officials, and newspapers reproduced in facsimile photographs in Eberhard Steneberg, *Arbeitsrat für Kunst: Berlin 1918–1921* (Düsseldorf: Edition Marzona, 1987), 2-9.

35. Steneberg, 54 and 99. Heise was then assistant to Gustav Pauli in the Hamburg Kunsthalle. In 1920 he was appointed director of the Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte in Lübeck.

36. Wilhelm Valentiner, *Umgestaltung der Museen im Sinne der neuen Zeit*, with supplements by K. E. Osthaus, P. Zucker, O. Grauthoff, and P. F. Schmidt, no. 8 in the series Schriften zur Zeit (Berlin: Grotesche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1919).

37. See Weinstein, 38–42.

38. See the correspondence between Gropius and Schmidt-Rottluff in Thiem and Zweite, 90.

39. Reprinted in Thiem and Zweite, 89-90. For a partial translation see Timothy O. Benson, et. al., *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, published in collaboration with University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1993), 274–275.

contributed a design for a spire suitable for Taut's visionary "House of Heaven" (Himmelshaus, fig. 8) that would unify the people, his statement shows little but skepticism towards the state:

> The artist should also be free in a socialist state, true to his goals which are always directed towards humanity, never the state . . . . As a logical consequence, the state should stay out of art.[40]

The tenor of this commentary was consistent with Schmidt-Rottluff's sparse statements about his art. In a collection of artists' statements in *Kunst und Künstler* (1914) grouped under the rubric "The New Program" he had insisted, "I don't have any program, only an inexplicable yearning to lay hold of what I see and feel and then to find the most direct expression possible for such experience."[41] He could not fathom the concept of an artistic program because for him art always retained its primordial meaning and essence; only its forms were new. This essential meaning could be captured neither by concepts nor words. In Hamburg in 1918, on the occasion of the first exhibition of his graphic art and publication of his portfolio *Nine Woodcuts*, he had deliberately distanced his concept of art from any political relationship:

> The goal of all art is directed toward mankind — never toward an incidental and temporal conglomeration called the state. The monarchical-capitalistic state was thus just as antagonistically inclined to all art as it will be for the bolshevist-socialist state. . . . For art nothing has changed at all.[42]

Valentiner was more accommodating of the state but equally outspoken on the economic order, insisting that "the task of the artist is to create a new belief within the socialized state. . . . From the new attitude the artist will become the bearer of the sense of community . . . . his works should not fall into the hands of the capitalists who have no sense for art."[43]

By the summer of 1920, when social and political calm had returned, Valentiner — as both collector and scholar — began to establish Schmidt-Rottluff within an art-historical context. *Portrait of Emy* played a role in these early efforts, appearing both in Valentiner's small monograph on Schmidt-Rottluff and in a reprinted version that appeared as an article in *Der Cicerone*.[44] This essay, along with Ernst Gosebruch's 1920 essay in *Genius*, Schapire's 1923 catalogue raisonné of Schmidt-Rottluff's graphics, and other articles by Niemeyer, Behne, von Sydow, and Ludwig Coellen, would form the foundation of the artist's reputation.[45]

40. Ida Katherine Rigby, *An alle Künstler! War — Revolution — Weimar: German Prints, Drawings, Posters, and Periodicals from the Robert Gore Rifkind Foundation*, exh. cat. (San Diego: University Gallery, San Diego State University, 1983), 17.

41. "Das neue Programm" in *Kunst und Künstler* 12 (1914): 308. Cited in Wietek, *Schmidt-Rottluff in Hamburg*, 35. Translation in Victor H. Miesel, ed., *Voices of German Expressionism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), 29.

42. "Über die Kunst im neuen Staat," *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt* no. 8 (6 December 1918): 148, cited in Moeller and Schmidt, 259.

43. Manfred Schlösser, ed., *Arbeitsrat für Kunst: Berlin, 1918–1921*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1980), 75.

44. Valentiner, *Schmidt-Rottluff*, plate 19.

45. Thiem and Zweite, 90–91.

Fig. 9 Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
Portrait of Valentiner I, 1923
Woodcut
19 9/16 x 15 1/2 in. (49.7 x 39.3 cm)
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for
German Expressionist Studies

Perhaps it was in gratitude for his first monograph that Schmidt-Rottluff made two woodcut portraits of Valentiner (at around this time he also made woodcut portraits of Niemeyer and Schapire).[46] In both woodcuts Schmidt-Rottluff alluded to Valentiner's profession (using the art-historical tradition of the attribute) by placing works of art in the background. Apparently one of his own sculptures appears behind Valentiner's head in *Portrait of Valentiner I* (Bildnis Valentiner I, fig. 9).[47] This print also signals a change in Schmidt-Rottluff's approach, with the large planes and volumes that had previously been constructed to create compositions replaced by webs of striations that describe natural forms. As did other Expressionists ranging from Otto Dix to Ludwig Meidner, Schmidt-Rottluff returned in the twenties to naturalistic handling of light, shade, and atmosphere, thus retreating from the formal advances of *Portrait of Emy*.

As a collector, Valentiner assisted Schmidt-Rottluff's career just when an increasing prominence was being given to the Expressionist generation in art magazines and collectors' print portfolios, a tendency already set in motion by such pioneering transitional journals as Paul Westheim's quarterly *Die Schaffenden* (The Creators), appearing from 1918 on in portfolio format.[48] *Die Schaffenden* had included prints by Schmidt-Rottluff in the first folio (his magnificent 1913 landscape woodcut, *House with Poplars* [Haus mit Pappeln],

46. Horst Uhr, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1982), 210.

47. The sculpture somewhat resembles Schmidt-Rottluff's *Figure Looking Backward* (Rückblickende, bronze, circa 1920, Brücke Museum), reproduced in *Karl-Schmidt-Rottluff: Das nachgelassene Werk seit den zwanziger Jahren: Malerei, Plastik, Kunstwerk*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Brücke Museum, 1977), no. 99, plate 55. While the figure behind Valentiner could also be interpreted as a person, the objects in the other woodcut portrait, *Valentiner II* (1923, Schapire 298), are clearly a painting and a wood sculpture. Attributes also appear in the self-portrait with Emy entitled *Double-Portrait* (Grohmann, 263).

48. See *Die Schaffenden: Eine Auswahl der Jahrgänge I bis III und Katalog des Mappenwerkes* (Berlin: Publica Verlagsgesellschaft in Berlin mbH), 17. Paul Westheim (1886–1963) also edited the influential periodical *Das Kunstblatt*.

Schapire 118) and in the third folio of the following year (*Landscape [Russian Forest]* [Landschaft (Russischer Wald)], woodcut, 1918, Schapire 229).

Now Schmidt-Rottluff, Nolde, Kirchner, and various other Expressionists were featured in one of the most luxuriously produced journals of this time, *Genius: Zeitschrift für werdende und alte Kunst* (Genius: Periodical for Nascent and Old Art). Edited by Carl Georg Heise and Kurt Pinthus (1886–1975) as an amalgam of literature and art, *Genius* sought to bring modernism within the established tradition, as implied in its subtitle. Articles by historians such as Niemeyer and Wilhelm Worringer explored medieval and Renaissance antecedents for Expressionism. For example, Schmidt-Rottluff's sculpture was discussed in Niemeyer's "Von Wesen und Wandlung der Plastik" (On the Essence and Transformation of Sculpture).[49] Schmidt-Rottluff's work was also featured prominently in the first number of the 1920 volume. Its frontispiece was a color reproduction of a watercolor head of 1918 from Valentiner's collection; and the first article (by Heise) reproduced Schmidt-Rottluff's painting *Studio Pause* (Atelierpause, 1910). The issue continued with a substantial article by Ernst Gosebruch on Schmidt-Rottluff as a painter (with an illustration of *Landscape with Early Sun* [Landschaft mit früher Sonne], 1919, also from Valentiner's collection).[50] Finally, *Portrait of Emy* was reproduced in Gosebruch's discussion to convey Schmidt-Rottluff's continued interest in mask-like elements reminiscent of both Picasso and Holdler.[51]

This scholarly attention given to Schmidt-Rottluff complemented the art market "discovery" of the artist well underway in 1919, the year *Portrait of Emy* was painted. As a printmaker, Schmidt-Rottluff gained access to a new, well-heeled audience by publishing a portfolio of nine religious woodcuts with Kurt Wolff's firm in Munich as well as a set of ten woodcuts on a variety of themes with I. B. Neumann, the Berlin book and print dealer who had first shown his work in 1914. In November, Schmidt-Rottluff had a major graphic exhibition in Halle curated by Niemeyer.[52]

Also in December, the Berlin dealer Ferdinand Möller (1882–1959) opened a show featuring the paintings of Schmidt-Rottluff, the first in a series of exhibitions dedicated to the Expressionists.[53] This show gained the sustained interest of Berlin collector Markus Kruss (1872–1962) in Schmidt-Rottluff's work.[54] He also had one-man shows in such important venues as the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover and Ludwig Schames's gallery in Frankfurt; and he began his participation in the exhibitions of the Dresden Secession Group.

Concurrently Schmidt-Rottluff benefited from the more liberal cultural policies of the new government, which allowed established museums to acquire work by the Expressionists with some consistency for the first time. For example, in 1919 Ludwig Justi bought *Village on the Sea* (Dorf am See, 1913) and in 1920 *Resting Woman*

49. *Genius* 1 (1919): 77–89.

50. Gosebruch, 5–20. This volume also includes Valentiner's article "Ein Altersentwurf Rembrandts," 44–56. Although Heise's appointment as director of the Lübeck Museum took place on 1 May 1920, he was already under consideration, having been urged by Max Sauerlandt to apply for the post when it was vacated by Karl Schaefer, who moved to the Applied Arts Museum in Cologne in early 1919. See Russalka Nikolov, "Carl Georg Heise in Lübeck, 1920–1933" in Junge, 138-148.

51. Gosebruch, 12–14. *Portrait of Emy* is not yet identified as being in Valentiner's collection and is titled simply *Bildnis*.

52. Wietek, *Schmidt-Rottluff in Hamburg*, 38–39.

53. See installation photographs in Eberhard Roters, *Galerie Ferdinand Möller: Die Geschichte einer Galerie für Moderne Kunst in Deutschland, 1917–1956* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1984), 37, with discussion of the show on 42–45. Cf. Thiem and Zweite, 88.

54. Moeller and Schmidt, 261.

(Ruhende Frau, 1912), both directly from Schmidt-Rottluff, for a new contemporary art museum in Berlin. Opened in August 1919 in the Kronprinzenpalais on the capital's most prestigious avenue, Unter den Linden, this innovation was actually a new department of the National Gallery of which Justi, as the museum's director, had long dreamed.[55] In 1920 Gustav Pauli, director of the Hamburg Kunsthalle, deaccessioned 400,000 marks' worth of paintings in order to acquire works by Nolde, Schmidt-Rottluff, and other modern artists.[56] Among other important museum directors who contributed to Schmidt-Rottluff's career at this crucial juncture was Friedrich Schreiber-Weigend (1879–1953), who led the newly founded Städtischen Kunstsammlung in Chemnitz.[57] He purchased Schmidt-Rottluff's 1910 painting *Autumn Landscape* (Herbstlandschaft).[58]

By 1920 Schmidt-Rottluff was becoming emblematic of Expressionism in ensuing discussions about the essence and meaning of the term. For example, Eckart von Sydow (who as director of Hanover's Kestner Gesellschaft would later acquire works by Schmidt-Rottluff along with those of the Constructivists) saw him as the quintessential Expressionist—an artist whose dramatic collisions of line and color transcended mere feeling to reveal the raw force of the "will" (in contrast with the "idyllic" and gentle portrayals by the Impressionists).[59] Other commentators had been drawn to Schmidt-Rottluff's "tectonic" approach to "built" pictures,[60] while still others applauded the emotional directness of his austere forms. As early as 1917, Ludwig Coellen had positioned Schmidt-Rottluff as the essence of Expressionism—the next stage in the sequence leading from Cézanne to Picasso.[61]

These two artists had released the elements of form from natural appearances, allowing their expressive potential to create space instead. Schmidt-Rottluff was said to have seen in this formal advance a new means of reflecting a world view (*Weltbegriff*) that can be called Expressionism. For Coellen, this "world view" was immanent (in opposition to the transcendental God of the Middle Ages and Renaissance) and vitalistic (in opposition to the materialist conception of Impressionism). As did Vasily Kandinsky, Coellen saw the artist's objectification of such a generalized world view as necessarily giving it a particular and individual inflection:

> The individual existence is a component and only a component of the universal life, which is the absolute . . . . Schmidt-Rottluff is seized by the wonder of existence. He sees being as it is, sustained and permeated by the essential cause from whence it originates.[62]

Coellen saw Schmidt-Rottluff moving from the "principle" of Cubism in such "picture-organisms" as *Still-Life with Thistles* (Stilleben mit Disteln, Kunsthalle, Bremen) to a complete formation in his portraits which, in their bright colors and rhythms,

55. Moeller and Schmidt, 260–261, and Kurt Winkler, "Ludwig Justi—Der Konservative Revolutionär" in Junge, 179.

56. See Karl Lorenz, "Betrachtungen und Wertung: Der eiserne Besen" in *Die Rote Erde* (January-March 1920): 348, reprinted in Wietek, *Schmidt-Rottluff in Hamburg*, 82.

57. The Städtischen Kunstsammlung was founded on 1 April 1920. See Moeller and Schmidt, 261.

58. Moeller and Schmidt, no. 15.

59. Eckart von Sydow, *Die deutsche expressionistische Kultur und Malerei* (Berlin: Furche, 1920), 56.

60. Commentary for Schmidt-Rottluff's *Landscape (Russian Forest)* (Schapire 229) in *Die Schaffenden* 2, no. 3 (1919), reprinted in *Die Schaffenden: Eine Auswahl*, 191.

61. Ludwig Coellen, "Schmidt-Rottluff," *Das Kunstblatt* 1, no. 1 (November 1917): 321–329, reprinted in *Die Schaffenden: Eine Auswahl*, 61–64.

62. Coellen, 62–64.

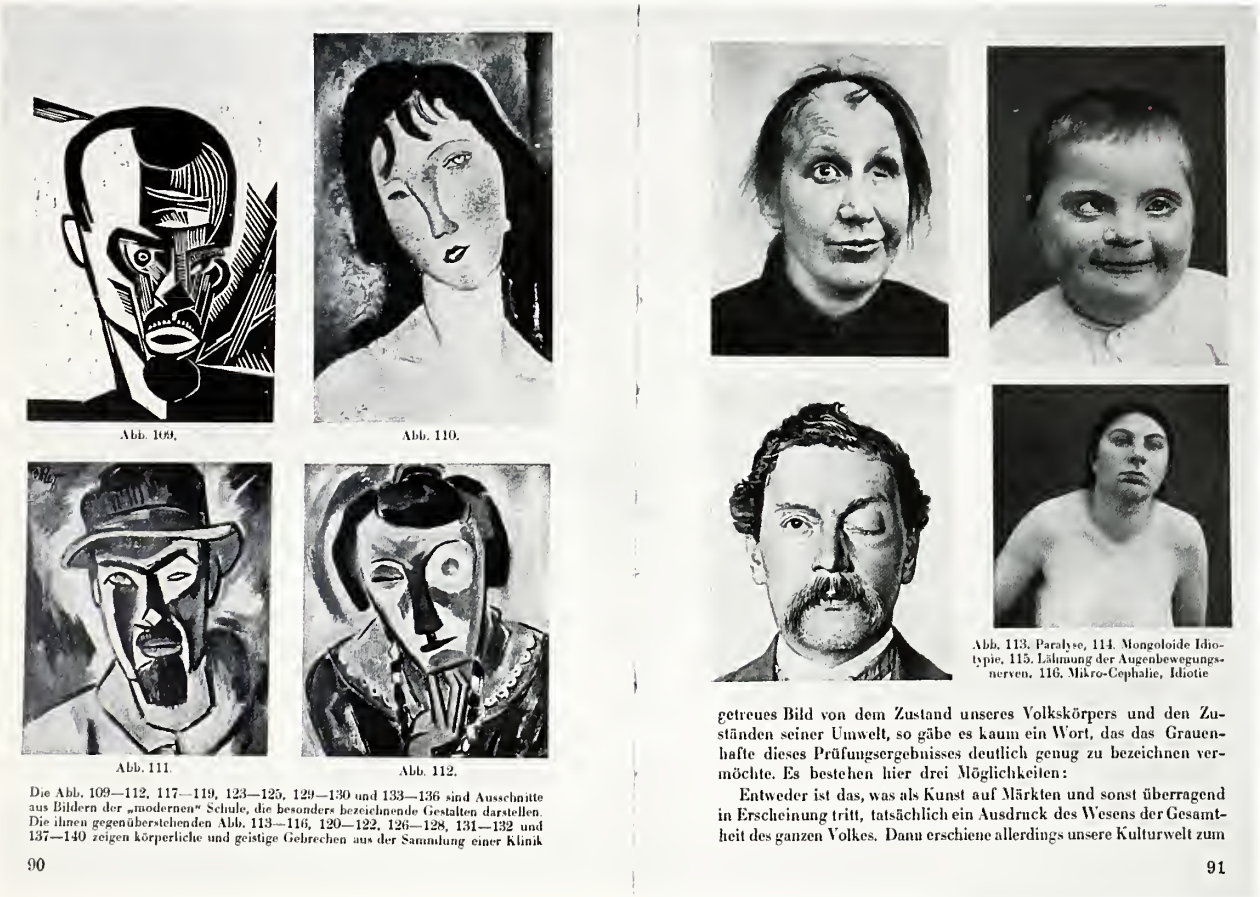

Abb. 109.

Abb. 110.

Abb. 111.

Abb. 112.

Die Abb. 109—112, 117—119, 123—125, 129—130 und 133—136 sind Ausschnitte aus Bildern der „modernen" Schule, die besonders bezeichnende Gestalten darstellen. Die ihnen gegenüberstehenden Abb. 113—116, 120—122, 126—128, 131—132 und 137—140 zeigen körperliche und geistige Gebrechen aus der Sammlung einer Klinik

90

Abb. 113. Paralyse, 114. Mongoloide Idiotypie, 115. Lähmung der Augenbewegungsnerven, 116. Mikro-Cephalie, Idiotie

getreues Bild von dem Zustand unseres Volkskörpers und den Zuständen seiner Umwelt, so gäbe es kaum ein Wort, das das Grauenhafte dieses Prüfungsergebnisses deutlich genug zu bezeichnen vermöchte. Es bestehen hier drei Möglichkeiten:

Entweder ist das, was als Kunst auf Märkten und sonst überragend in Erscheinung tritt, tatsächlich ein Ausdruck des Wesens der Gesamtheit des ganzen Volkes. Dann erschiene allerdings unsere Kulturwelt zum

91

Fig. 10 Paul Schultze-Naumburg, *Kunst und Rasse*
Page spread showing illustrations, pp. 90–91

could achieve universal meaning (*Allgemeinbedeutung*) in a coherent form.[63] Nearly ten years later, in his widely influential book *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Art of the 20th Century) Carl Einstein extolled Schmidt-Rottluff's sparse, concentrated style as it matured around 1915 with its origins in early Cubism and African art.[64] *Women Outdoors* (1919), *Self-Portrait with Hat*, and *Portrait of Emy* are among the works illustrated.[65] For Einstein, Schmidt-Rottluff's importance lay in his concentration on volume and form and on his reliance entirely on pictorial means rather than "literary" associations. Even at the expense of becoming somewhat "clumsy" (*klötzern*), these pictures are "severe and honest" (*streng und ehrlich*).

It is ironic that *Portrait of Emy* and *Self-Portrait with Hat*, paired in Einstein's book and in Valentiner's collection, should only two years later find their way into a new world — one diametrically opposed to Coellen and von Sydow's admiration of the

63. Thiem and Zweite, no. 134, plate 48.

64. *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, 2nd. ed. (Berlin: Propyläen, 1928), 135.

65. *Portrait of Emy* and the companion self-portrait are listed as being in the Valentiner collection in Einstein, 563, nos. 371 and 375.

consummate Expressionist and also opposed to Valentiner's collecting and integrating of modern art into the great Western tradition. In 1928 the two portraits were denigrated in Paul Schultze-Naumburg's virulent anti-modernist proto-Nazi tract *Kunst und Rasse* (fig. 10).[66] Over several years, the reactionary architect and genre painter Schultze-Naumburg had perfected a technique of contrasting photographs of purportedly "good" and "bad" examples in a series of architectural books entitled *Kulturarbeiten* (Cultural Works). Now, as an adherent to the blood-and-soil ideology of Adolf Hitler (whom he had met in 1924), he juxtaposed reproductions of Expressionist art with photographs of the physically and mentally disabled to imply that such art was "degenerate."[67] His book was among the prototypes for the catalogue for the infamous "Entartete Kunst" (Degenerate Art) exhibition held in Munich and various other cities in Germany beginning in 1937.

Some fifty works (twenty-five of them oil paintings) by Schmidt-Rottluff were pilloried in the exhibition, and more than 600 of his works were confiscated from German public museums.[68] Although he was harassed beginning in 1933 (when he was asked to resign from Berlin's prestigious Academy of the Arts), Schmidt-Rottluff had been able to see his works exhibited in German museums until after the 1936 Summer Olympics — and was even able to sell twenty-four watercolors at a show held that summer in Möller's Berlin gallery. However, by October 1936 things had taken a turn for the worse. The Department of Contemporary Art that had been founded by Justi in Berlin in 1919 was closed. In December of that year, Schmidt-Rottluff turned a weary but hopeful eye toward America, where he had recently had his first one-man show at the Westermann Gallery in New York. Having just learned that Valentiner had arranged to have the show brought to Detroit, he wrote his friend:

> That you have traced down my works everywhere, across all kinds of spatial distance — at Franke's, Möller's — and have again and again been stimulated to consider them — the watercolor exhibition, Westermann — has especially touched me in this year, all the more because in all the places where your advice was discernable, a certain joy seems to arise. It has surely been a long time since your first bold advance twelve years ago. Now, however, the endorsement slowly seems to be coming.[69]

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66. A second edition was published in Munich by Lehmann in 1935.

67. Christoph Zuschlag, *"Entartete Kunst" — Austellungsstrategien im Nazi-Deutschland* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995), 382.

68. Stephanie Barron, ed., *"Degenerate Art": The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, published in collaboration with Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1991), 340–347.

69. Schmidt-Rottluff to Valentiner, 13 December 1936, in Thiem and Zweite, 98.

PROVENANCE

W. R. Valentiner, 1919; to Valentiner Estate, 1958; to NCMA, 1965.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania College for Women, "Twentieth-Century Master Movements: German Expressionism" (organized by Museum of Modern Art, New York), 14 November–4 December 1951, then traveling (as *Head of a Woman*).

Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art, "German and Austrian Expressionism: Art in a Turbulent Era," 10 March–30 April 1978; catalogue, discussed 19, listed 30, fig. 21.

Portrait of Emy (fig. 1), detail

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Introduction to the Collections. rev. ed. Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1992, illus. 259.

Fig. 1 Lyonel Feininger
American, 1871–1956, active in Germany
1887–1937
The Green Bridge II, 1916
Oil on canvas
49 3/8 x 39 1/2 in. (125.4 x 100.3 cm)
North Carolina Museum of Art
Gift of Mrs. Ferdinand Möller 57.38.1

Lyonel Feininger's *The Green Bridge II*: Notes on War and Memory

Peter Nisbet

On 19 July 1916, Lyonel Feininger's youngest son, six-year-old Lux, and his housekeeper, Anni, were at the train station in Zehlendorf, a suburb on the southern outskirts of Berlin where the American artist lived with his family. They had gone to greet a hospital train with some 400 newly wounded German soldiers returning from the murderous battles on the Somme. The children were distributing flowers (Lux was handing out dahlias), and adults were passing out cigars. In recounting this in a letter the same day to his wife, Feininger tells how, moved by Anni's and Lux's descriptions of the scene, he immediately sent some of the cigars that he had received a few days earlier for his forty-fifth birthday. Less than a week later, on 25 July, the artist reported that Anni's elder brother, aged twenty-seven, had been killed in the fighting.[1]

In that same year, 1916, Feininger painted the North Carolina Museum of Art's *The Green Bridge II* (fig. 1, Hess 163).[2] World War I and its progress were impinging as much on the artist's life as they had from the beginning, though his letters record a trajectory of changing responses and slowly growing disillusionment.[3] As early as 8 September 1914, Feininger had noted on a postcard "Mauberge has fallen. 40,000 prisoners." In summer 1915, this matter-of-factness had given way to ringing enthusiasm at the "wonderful progress in the East" in the campaigns against the Russian army. "Yesterday," notes a letter of 6 August, "was a day extraordinarily rich in news of victories! End of the first year of war!" There is here little evidence of the weary, horrified skepticism to come.

By summer 1916, Feininger was writing bitterly of the "eternally anguishing thought of war" (12 July), which he saw as "this monstrous, man-eating machine" (23–24 July). While he still patriotically supported Germany, asserting that "all those who are waging war against us, are doing so from the same imperialist reason, but they accuse Germany of this very ambition!" (31 July), he anticipated that, by the end of the year, the combatants will realize the "pointlessness of further struggle and devastation" (22 July).

In the letters of 1917, however, the war is reflected primarily in long passages about rationing, the availability of food and artist's materials, and worries about the war economy (for example, 3 and 11 August). "The gas and coal ordinances can go to hell, along with the whole rest of the mess" (18 August). A bored letter from his friend, the poet Alfred Knoblauch, prompts the thought that "the war only interests a few people any

1. Feininger's letters to his wife, Julia, are in the collection of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, on deposit at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, as part of the very extensive Feininger Archive (bMS Ger 146). They are quoted by kind permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and T. Lux Feininger. Further references to these letters simply cite the date in the body of the text. All translations in this essay are by the author. I would like to thank Huston Paschal, Achim Moeller, and Ulrich Luckhardt for help and guidance.

2. Hess numbers refer to the summary catalogue of the artist's oils compiled by his widow, Julia, published as an appendix to the standard, but now outdated monograph on the artist by Hans Hess, *Lyonel Feininger* (New York, 1959). Achim Moeller Fine Art, New York, is preparing a new catalogue raisonné of the oil paintings.

3. Feininger's creative work and experience during the war years awaits a detailed study, using letters and documents beyond the correspondence with Julia primarily cited here. (The Feininger Archive at Harvard contains a wealth of material not yet fully evaluated by scholars, especially those who have relied on typed excerpts from Feininger's correspondence prepared by Julia after his death.) This preliminary essay hopes to go beyond previous assessments, which have underplayed the importance of the war and rendered unsatisfying, brief judgments, such as that by Hess, who argues that the artist "tried to remain as unprejudiced as possible and to stay above the warring parties" (Hess, 72). Although Feininger is not mentioned, a useful and compendious survey of the relationship of European and American artists to the 1914–1918 conflict is provided by Richard Cork, *Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War*, exh. cat. (New Haven, 1994).

Fig. 2 Lyonel Feininger
"An American Coat of Arms Fit for the Times," cover of *Wieland* 1 no. 22 (Munich), 1915
13 x 11 3/4 in. (33 x 29.7 cm)
Harvard College Library

more" (6 August).[4] Clues as to the effect of the war on Feininger in its final year are rare (Feininger and his wife did not spend any summer months apart in 1918, so there are no letters), but certain postwar comments about his state as a "downtrodden, war-sick, melancholy, brooding human being" can give some idea of the artist's state of mind.[5]

This essay asks whether the war, which played such a prominent role in Feininger's emotional life, as recorded in this correspondence, also had a noticeable impact on his visual production. To what extent can the painting under discussion be usefully related to the war and its effects?

In general terms, the most immediate reflection of the European upheaval can be found in the political cartoons that Feininger drew in 1914 and 1915 in support of the German war effort, such as one criticizing the then-non-combatant United

4. After the United States entered the war in April 1917, the constraints on the artist increased. Feininger, as an American citizen, had to report to the local police station every day, and there were certain restrictions on his movements. In the letter of 27 August 1917 in which he describes this, Feininger nevertheless affirmed energetically that he was "a loyal friend of Germany [who] despises the policy of the American government."

5. Feininger to his father-in-law, Karl Lilienfeld, 30 June 1919, Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum.

States for its alleged support of the Allies (fig. 2).[6] The artist's early career had been focused on cartoons and caricatures for humorous and satirical journals in Berlin, Paris, and Chicago. However, having achieved considerable success and renown in this activity, he had, beginning in 1907, laboriously transformed himself into a painter and serious artist. The decision to return to cartoons may reflect a desire to earn money, but it was surely also a genuine response to the political situation. His letters certainly give occasional evidence of the genuinely creative enthusiasm with which he undertook this work.[7]

Sometimes aspects and echoes of the war make an appearance in Feininger's independent works on paper. Examples can be found in such works as a watercolor of New Year's Eve 1915, entitled *The Battle Fleet* (fig. 3), in which, typically for Feininger, the warring ships are nineteenth-century men-of-war, watched from the shore by a Biedermeier family and others, or a drawing of January 1918 showing a Zeppelin airship hovering menacingly over one of the artist's beloved small German villages (fig. 4). Later in 1918, Feininger painted two watercolors on the theme of Dionysiac victory celebrations.[8] However, in Feininger's painted oeuvre, the relationship to World War I is more oblique, more implied, more allusive. To understand the ways in which a painting such as *The Green Bridge II* might also have an association with the war, one must first consider a number of Feininger's other works from the years 1914 to 1918.

Fig. 3 Lyonel Feininger
The Battle Fleet, 1915
Watercolor and ink on paper
8 1/4 x 10 1/16 in. (21 x 25.5 cm)
Collection of Marvin and
Janet Fishman, Milwaukee
Photograph by Dedra M. Walls

Fig. 4 Lyonel Feininger
Zeppelin above Neppermin, 1918
Watercolor and ink on paper
Dimensions and location unknown
Photograph courtesy Feininger Archive,
Busch-Reisinger Museum

6. For information on Feininger's career and production as a cartoonist, see *Lyonel Feininger: Karikaturen, Comic Strips, Illustrationen, 1885–1915*, exh. cat. (Hamburg, 1981), where the wartime work is discussed and illustrated under nos. 162–171. Ulrich Luckhardt's essay for this catalogue, "Ein bekannter Maler—ein vergessener Karikaturist," addresses the chauvinistic content of this work, pp. 14, 16.

7. See, for example, his letter of 4 August 1915, discussing his invention of an anti-British cartoon (*Karikaturen*, cat. no. 171, the drawing for which is now on extended loan to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, [inv. no. EL67.1400]). Although there is no evidence that the financial support that Feininger received from his father-in-law throughout his first decade as a serious painter was cut back with the war, the opportunity to reduce his dependence on that support may have been welcome. Furthermore, the outbreak of the war had put an end to well-advanced plans for Feininger to design a series of toy locomotives, a project which the artist viewed as a great potential source of income.

8. Both watercolors are now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York (inv. nos. 129.66 and 130.66). Close to the contemporaneous work of George Grosz in technique and style, these works perhaps criticize the frenzied celebrations of the enemies of defeated Germany.

Fig. 5 Lyonel Feininger
Self-Portrait, 1915
Oil on canvas
39 1/2 x 31 1/2 in. (100.3 x 80 cm)
Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation,
Houston, Texas

Take, for example, the extraordinary *Self-Portrait* of 1915 (fig. 5, Hess 137). Overt depictions of the artist's own appearance are notably rare in Feininger's paintings; certainly there are none that exhibit the expressionist intensity of this work. A quarter-century after it was painted, the artist recalled it in the following terms:

> [I]n all the years of my work as a painter I have never painted a self-portrait with the intention of giving a physical likeness. However, I have here one painting of a head for which I used my own likeness which was conceived in 1915 during the first world war as the visible expression of a state of spiritual rebellion. . . . As a creative work, I consider it one of my best . . . . The head is at least one and a half times life-size, being monumentally dimensioned. The expression is demoniac in its grief and fierce repudiation; the coloring in support of the spiritual content of the picture, symbolical: the head, of a ghastly, pale greenish yellow; the garment, a dull olive. This color combination is set against the most unfathomable, maybe most spiritual, blue I have ever painted; the blue enclosed by a black gothic arch. The picture is uncompromisingly severe.[9]

Fig. 6 Lyonel Feininger
The Deserted Child, 1915
Watercolor and ink on paper
12 3/8 x 9 1/4 in. (31.5 x 23.5 cm)
Collection Rodman C. Rockefeller
Photograph courtesy Achim Moeller Fine Art, New York

The emotional ferocity of the picture is startling, especially in the work of an artist perhaps now best known for a lyrical, almost romantic approach to depictions of landscape and architecture. Moreover, this self-portrait is not an isolated instance of emotionally resonant compositions from these years. In 1915 and 1916, Feininger was concerned with the theme of *The Deserted Child*, in which a solitary boy is forsaken by four adults who turn and walk away. Interestingly, the figure at the right in both the painting of 1916 (Hess 157) and the watercolor of the previous year (fig. 6) appears to be wearing the peaked cap of a military uniform, thereby making the unsurprising link between abandoned or orphaned children and the effects of war. The rigorously simple monumentality of the composition protects it from sentimentality, leaving instead a powerfully melancholy and pessimistic impression. Given the history of the artist's own childhood in America, in which he was sent away to live with friends in the country by his unhappy and incompatible parents, it is hard not to see here another form of self-portraiture and autobiographical reflection.[10]

It is clear that World War I provoked a marked rise in the emotional temperature of Feininger's paintings. In an important, linked development, this period also saw substantially increased variety and diversity in the artist's approaches to painting. Feininger's stylistic pluralism reached its apogee at this time. Consider the wide spectrum of styles and moods evident in paintings of 1916. These can range

9. Feininger to Dr. Walter Heil of the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, 30 October 1942, Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum. Compare the artist's inscription on the verso of a photograph of this painting (also in the Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum): "a terrifying porträt [*sic*], indicating my stress during the war, but not painted in detail after Nature." For a recent discussion of this work, see Florens Deuchler, *Lyonel Feininger: Sein Weg zum Bauhaus-Meister* (Leipzig, 1996), 97f., though Deuchler is incorrect to write that Herwarth Walden, the director of the *Sturm* gallery, wanted to make a postcard of this painting. Walden actually wanted Feininger to sit for a portrait photograph for a postcard at the time of his 1917 solo exhibition at the gallery, an idea Feininger rejected (Feininger to Julia, 11 August 1917).

10. Ernst Scheyer also believes the picture to have "biographical significance" (*Lyonel Feininger: Caricature and Fantasy* [Detroit, 1964], 19). Feininger recounts some details of his family's dark emotional history in a lengthy letter to Julia on 15 August 1917, making little attempt to hide his bitterness (as when, for example, he blames the early death of his sister on parental discord). Interestingly, one of Feininger's most surprisingly anecdotal and disturbing early pictures also deals with the theme of adult cruelty to children. *The Child Murderess* of 1908 (Hess 31), repeated in another version of 1913 (Hess 103), shows a worker searching a drain, presumably for the killed baby of the apparently loose woman standing nearby. Whenever Feininger exhibited these paintings, he gave them the protective, neutralizing title of *Man Hole* or *Street Sweepers*.

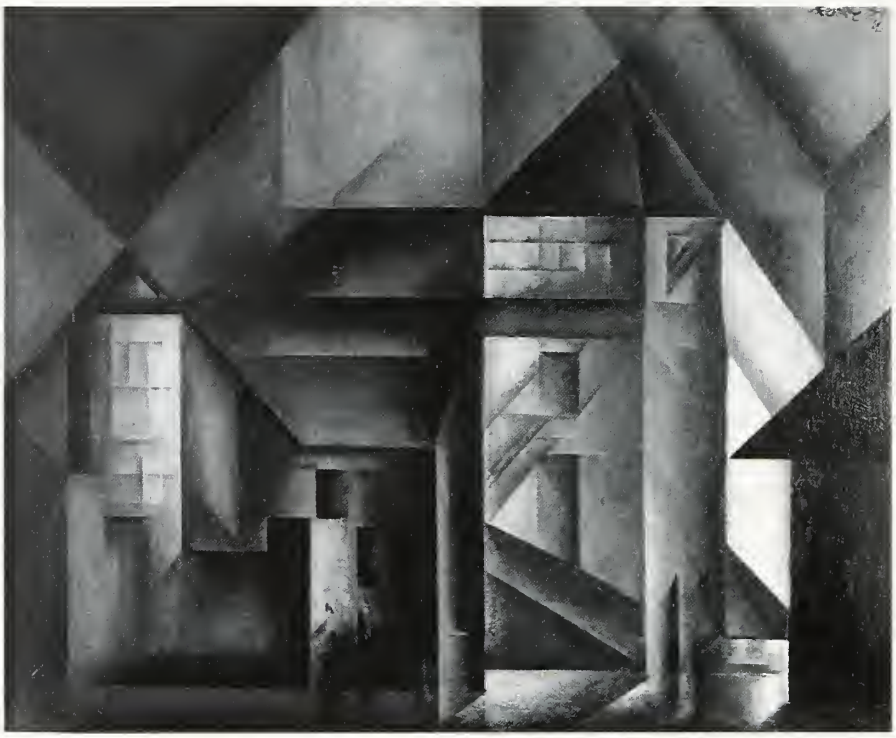

Fig. 7 Lyonel Feininger
Vollersroda III, 1916
Oil on canvas
31 1/2 x 39 3/8 in. (80 x 100 cm)
Private collection, New York
Photograph courtesy Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum

from the strict prismatic Cubism of *Vollersroda III* (fig. 7, Hess 164) and *Behind the Church* (Hess 155) to the willfully crude, child-like simplicity of *The Lovers* (Hess 167) and *The Blue Clown* (fig. 8, Hess 154), from the expressionist monumentality of *The Deserted Child* discussed above to the decorative luminosity of *The Green Bridge II*.

Feininger himself was conscious at the time of this multiplicity of styles, and of its relationship to the world-historical events surrounding him. He sought, in a major programmatic letter (probably to his friend Alois Schardt), to defend himself against possible criticism. It is worth quoting this text, written in March 1917 but not published until 1931, at length:

> We have eliminated nature as a "guideline" and "standard of comparison" for creating [*Gestalten*]. We have overcome nature in the effort to be able to create freely. The individual work serves each time as the expression of our most authentic state of the soul, and of the ineluctable, imperative necessity of liberation through appropriate creation: in the rhythm, form, color and mood of the picture. From this alone, there emerges the heterogeneity of creations by one and the same painter, a heterogeneity which

leads, according to hitherto prevailing criteria of judgment, so easily to the perception of inconsistency in the artist. . . . Modern man is a tormented, multiplicitous, differentiated being, and the high goal of achieving the simplest form for a lastingly valid pictorial expression, is unspeakably difficult to attain. Hence the strong pendulum swings between extreme rigidity and subsequent release through agitation, between colorlessness and color, all of which are states of the soul, not a program. The terrible world events weigh heavily on us and leave dark traces on my pictures, as you know. What could be more self-evident than my ever recurring battles for gaiety in the picture, which strives for exactly the opposite, i.e. movement and colorfulness?[11]

Surely this is the dialectical context within which *The Green Bridge II* is best understood. A brief visual inventory of the picture can emphasize its gentle charm. *The Green Bridge II* shows a view down a narrow street bounded and visually closed off by rows of buildings with mansard roofs. Filling the street is a disparate group of figures of many types, ranging from workers carrying tools (a pickax and a shovel) to a young, short-skirted woman, cloaked men, an adult and child, and several others. At the left, a man enters a lit interior, perhaps a bar; at the right and in the center, street lights glow in the dusk. Across the foreground of the composition stretches a single span of an arched bridge, along which further figures can be seen walking and observing the activity below. Painted in a warm palette of mauves, greens, olives, pinks, and oranges, the entire scene is energized by a rhythm of gentle curves that extend contours and forms from objects into the surrounding atmosphere or adjacent motifs.

Fig. 8 Lyonel Feininger
The Blue Clown, 1916
Oil on canvas
19 x 16 in. (48.2 x 41.6 cm)
Estate of the artist
Photograph by Adolph Studly, courtesy Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum

This is a compact, densely populated scene of small-town inhabitants returning from work at the end of the day. Feininger subjects his figures to some mild anatomical distortion, though by no means with the exaggeration and scalar disproportion of his caricatures and other closely related paintings. One commentator has justly described the painting as "toylike and dancing."[12]

At one level, then, *The Green Bridge II* derives its meaning from Feininger's conscious striving for gaiety, movement, color, and ease, after his work in dark times on more emotionally strenuous, rigorous compositions. The painting's very motif of the end of the workday with its attendant pleasures (drinking at a bar, the company of young women) is an emblem of this moment of relaxation and recreation.

11. Reprinted in Lothar Schreyer, *Lyonel Feininger: Dokumente und Visionen* (Munich, 1957), 19–20. Feininger goes on to use the example of the composer who can use a wide range of tempi and genres (orchestral, sonata, song, fugue, etc.), in order to stress that in Expressionism "the picture is elevated to the most sensitive measuring instrument ['Dynameter'] of our emotions." In a published exchange of comments with the poet Alfred Knoblauch which originally appeared in 1917 in the avant-garde journal *Der Sturm* to coincide with the artist's first solo exhibition at the *Sturm* gallery, Feininger rendered the idea about variety and alternation in his pictures in sharper-edged language: "You must have noticed the malice in my work—after a devout, deeply felt religious work, I always let off a lot of steam afterwards with comical, farcical pictures" (Schreyer, 25).

12. Hess, 74.

Fig. 9 Lyonel Feininger
Street in Arceuil, 1915
Watercolor, ink, and charcoal on paper
11 1/4 x 9 7/16 in. (28.5 x 24 cm)
Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection
Photograph by Petersen

It is also at the level of subject and image that the painting distinguishes itself from the actual and immediate circumstances of 1916. The painting relates emphatically to the past, either remembered or imagined, in at least three important ways. All three points of memorial reference relate to Feininger's connection with French culture in ways that suggest that *The Green Bridge II* can be considered as a meditation on France, one of Germany's main enemies in World War I.

Firstly, the painting harks back to views and experiences that Feininger had had in Paris during his stays in the French capital. Many of his quickly noted sketches from 1906 to 1908 record Parisian houses, street scenes, and views of the Meudon and Arceuil aquaducts; and there are a large number of worked-up drawings from the following years that treat the theme of individuals grouped on a street extending backwards between rows of old houses.[13] It was the move to Paris ten years earlier, in 1906, that had set the stage for Feininger's gradual abandonment of cartooning and first attempts at serious painting. His affection for France remained constant.[14]

Further confirmation that Paris was very much on the artist's mind during these war years is provided by a number of other works from around 1916 taking

13. For a selection of the artist's so-called "nature-notes" of Parisian subjects (though one almost exclusively dependent on works in the collection of Achim Moeller Fine Art), see the illustrations in Deuchler, especially in the section "Feininger in Paris" (pp. 30–60). Deuchler also reproduces a small sketch, dated to 1908, which must count as one of the earliest ideas for the *Green Bridge* composition (fig. 180, p. 164). The view rendered in the painting under discussion has not yet been definitively identified. It clearly relates to scenes of aquaducts and viaducts passing over urban streets which Feininger must have seen, but is probably not the Arceuil aquaduct, whose high double arches and grand extension are so unmistakable.

14. Significantly, while Feininger may have expressed negative opinions about the Russians, the English, and the Germans in his letters and cartoons during the war, he appears to have spared the French any criticism. The special place that France continued to hold in his mind can be occasionally glimpsed in his letters during the war, such as when the artist adds the phrase "Quatorze Juillet!" on a letter to Julia of 14 July 1916, or when, reporting on a Berlin discussion about modern art with dealers and sympathetic enthusiasts, he can say "but in the end it is only in Paris that one understands what's important today" (30 July 1916).

Fig. 10 Lyonel Feininger
Street Scene, 1915
Watercolor and ink on paper
12 1/8 x 9 1/2 in. (30.7 x 24.1 cm)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin —
Preussischer Kulturbesitz
Kupferstichkabinett

Parisian views as their theme. For example, several watercolors show the streets of Arceuil and its distinctive viaduct, including two closely related compositions of late March 1915 (figs. 9 and 10).[15]

Secondly, the implied time period of the depicted scene is a rather unspecific moment in the nineteenth century, perhaps the early nineteenth century, to judge by the capes, tall hats, and other cues. It has been plausibly suggested that Feininger is here, as elsewhere, generally evoking the world of his favorite novelists, Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, and Eugène Sue. Many of their works are "set in Paris in the 1830s (our beloved romantic period)," as Feininger wrote to his wife about Sue's *Mystères de Paris* (3 August 1909).[16]

And thirdly, the picture recalls rather precisely an earlier picture, *Green Bridge* of 1909 (fig. 11, Hess 44), which presents a virtually identical scene.[17] *Green Bridge* can stand for France not only in its depicted view, but also in its public history. It was included in Feininger's first significant contribution to an art exhibition, the six works that he showed at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris in May 1911. Furthermore, this 1909 painting was the only earlier composition included among the illustrations of his most recent

15. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, also holds a drawing entitled *Arceuil II* of 19 March 1915 (inv. no. 79.78). See also the *Schangdarm* (that is, *Gendarme*) of 25 May 1915 and the *Street in Paris* of 22 September 1915, both illustrated in Serge Sabarsky Gallery, *Lyonel Feininger: Drawings and Watercolors*, exh. cat. (New York, 1979), pls. 4 and 6.

16. Ulrich Luckhardt, *Lyonel Feininger* (Munich, 1989), 28f., summarizes the evidence for Feininger's intensive involvement with these authors in 1908–09, and makes the plausible case that "it was literature that enabled Feininger to give his work a new content, which for him was in fact the decisive step away from his work with cartoons." The continuing importance of Hugo to Feininger should not be underestimated, as two examples can show. On 4 August 1912, the artist wrote to Julia of his unbounded love for this author, an incomparable visionary of the truth. And then, in 1916, the year of *The Green Bridge II*, Feininger enigmatically inscribed the name of Jean Valjean, the hero of Hugo's *Les Misérables*, under his signature on a rigorous Cubist drawing of a village scene, dated 7 April 1916 (Museum of Modern Art, New York [inv. no. 81.78]). For an illustration and excellent discussion of this drawing and Feininger's relationship to Cubism, see John Elderfield, *The Modern Drawing: 100 Works on Paper from the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: 1983), 98f. However, Elderfield does not address this puzzling inscription, which, moreover, is associated with the additional inscribed date 26.x.16 (perhaps referring to 1816 and the time in which the novel is set?) and the word "Fibel."

17. This painting, now apparently in a private collection in New York, has unfortunately not been accessible for study. For a color reproduction, see R. N. Ketterer, *L. Feininger: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen, Graphik*, exh. cat. (Campione, 1965), no. 1, p. 5. In 1910–11, Feininger made an etching of this composition (in reverse), which was published in 1922, indicating a continuing interest in the theme and composition. The North Carolina Museum of Art owns a copy of the etching, a gift of W. R. Valentiner (65.10.17). See L. E. Prasse, *Feininger: A Definitive Catalogue of His Graphic Work* (Cleveland, 1972), no. 22.

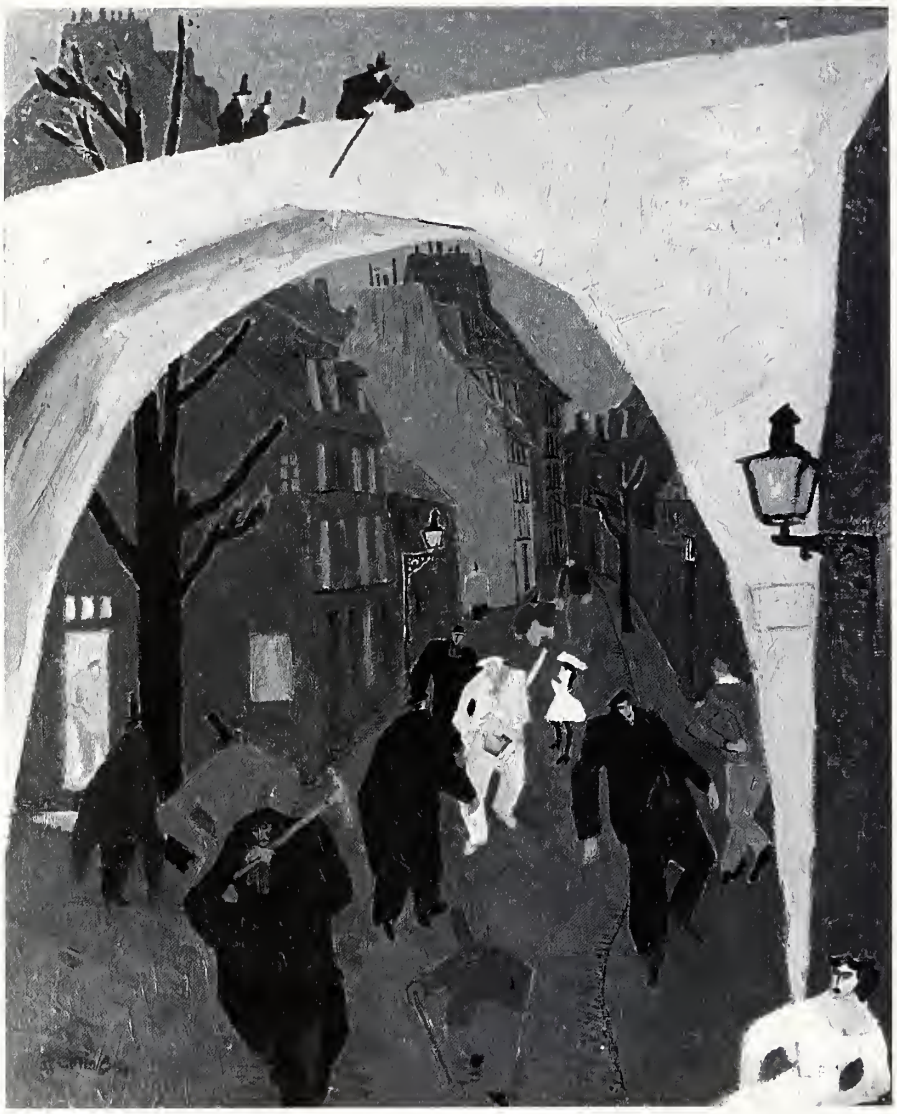

Fig. 11 Lyonel Feininger
Green Bridge, 1909
Oil on canvas
39 3/8 x 31 7/8 in. (100 x 81 cm)
Location unknown
Photograph by Oliver Baker, courtesy Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum

18. *Les Tendances Nouvelles*, no. 56 (November 1912), paid substantial attention to Feininger. His artist's statement appears on pp. 1339-1340. A reproduction of a major recent painting (Hess 63) occupied the cover of the journal, and four other paintings of 1912 (Hess 68, 79, 87, 93), in addition to *Green Bridge* of 1909, were illustrated on three inside pages (following p. 1346). In his extensive autobiographical statement, Feininger stresses the Latin strains in his ancestry, pointing to his father's Italian grandmother and his mother's French grandmother, making him "rather romano-latino-germano-american" (p. 1339). For information on this rare, little-known but highly important Symbolist journal, its contents, collaborators, dating, and significance, see the introduction by Jonathan Fineberg to the reprint in four volumes (New York, 1980). The circumstances and extent of Feininger's contact with the journal and its thought-world and its influence on his art have yet to be explored. It is noteworthy that Feininger exhibited two prints at the Salon organized by the journal in Paris in 1911 (see Henry Breuil, "Le Salon Unioniste de 1911," *Les Tendances Nouvelles*, no. 52 [December 1911], p. 1231, who describes the artist as a "master of the fantastic" and his vision as "colossal, unheard-of").

19. Interestingly, three other paintings of this period undertake an identical transformation of an earlier work into one structured by a network of curved, intersecting forms. Compare the earlier and later versions of *Jesuits* (1908 [Hess 27] and 1915 [Hess 135]); *Newspaper Readers* (1908 and 1909 [Hess 34 and 42] and 1916 [Hess 165]); and *Yellow Street* (1909 [Hess 49] and 1917/18 [Hess 186]). This imitative, recapitulatory procedure is

work that Feininger published in the Parisian Symbolist journal *Les Tendances Nouvelles* late in 1912. This issue also included Feininger's first published statement, in which he remarks "[i]t was only in France that I learned to know the supreme happiness of working for oneself and of developing oneself in art."[18]

It was also in France, during a visit to the very 1911 Salon just mentioned, that Feininger encountered the Cubist works that were to profoundly influence his concept of form and composition. The difference between the two versions of *Green Bridge* is to be located in this discovery of Cubism. The 1916 painting translates the 1909 composition rather literally into a mildly Cubist composition, with the idiosyncracy that the Cubist interpenetration of forms is accomplished exclusively with curved lines and shadings. This rhythmic patterning extends even to the artist's curved signature in the lower left, which flexes to match the bridge's arch.

In an optimistic letter of summer 1916 to Julia, Feininger writes of having had "as good and cheerful a working day as ever in my happiest times. I am now, at last, in equilibrium; . . . and have found color. Also, if you wish (and you do wish!), the curve" (29 July 1916).[19] Perhaps the curve, if this enigmatic allusion can be so understood, carried a certain personal meaning, as a formal device that not only suited a colorful, serene composition, but also paid a private tribute to his wife's aesthetic preference. After all, Feininger often credited Julia with a key role in his maturation as a serious artist in Paris (as in a letter of 15 August 1917), and a covert reference to her encouragement would not be out of place in a painting that appears almost to be a memorial tribute to the time, place, and circumstances of that breakthrough.

The Green Bridge II is not the most emotionally wrought work of 1916, not the most experimental or the most prophetic of the artist's future development. In fact, its retrospective, traditional, intimate character might seem to render it anomalous and marginal. But consider Feininger's remarks in a letter of August 1916 about taking walks with Julia in the spring: "Perhaps our nerves and senses were exhausted at the time, but afterwards it becomes so deeply clear to one, how happy we were. The whole question of consciousness and memory (i.e. yearning) is one that concerns me more and more intensively, the older I get. It is understandable that the creative artist tries to clarify his thoughts about this — because yearning is the motive for everything" (1 August 1916).[20] Feininger's painting was surely a part of this process of clarification, carried out in the midst of the war, with its turmoil of spiritual anguish and conflicting allegiances.

Moreover, Feininger himself explicitly recognized that the war had contributed to his understanding of the central motif of this painting: the dominant, embracing bridge. In his 1917 exchange with Knoblauch, Feininger wrote that "the church, mill, the bridge, the house — and the cemetery — have filled me since childhood with deep,

actually rare in Feininger's painted oeuvre, and must be distinguished from his common practice of working in series or with many different variations on a similar motif, seen from different vantage points, such as the famous group of works dealing with the image of the village church at Gelmeroda. For the latter, see Andreas Hüneke, "Motif und Thema in den Bildserien Lyonel Feiningers" in Wolfgang Büche, ed., *Lyonel Feininger: Gelmeroda, Ein Maler und sein Motif*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart, 1995), 15–21.

20. Although it has not been sufficiently stressed that, in Feininger's usage, the notion of "yearning" ("*Sehnsucht*") could apply both to the past (as in nostalgia) and to the future, the artist's consistency on the importance of memory is remarkable. For example, shortly before he died, he could write to old friends that "most people seem to look upon memories as something to be repudiated as being mere 'escapism' — out of present day delightful realities I take it — but I stand firmly in my conviction that memories are precious and serve to clarify, and are a source of creative stimulus. When at work, I receive an upsurge of warmth and renewal of happiness in what I am doing, and would not exchange this for all the 'positive realism' of our present, so full of errors and incapacity" (Feininger to Theodore and Margy Spicer-Simson, 31 August 1954, Feininger Archive, Busch-Reisinger Museum). For a very subtle and rewarding reading of Feininger in terms of his nostalgia for the Germany remembered by the generation of his emigrant parents, see Reinhold Heller, "'Memories are rooted in childhood days': Emigrant Identity in the Work of Lyonel Feininger" in *Lyonel Feininger: Awareness, Recollection, and Nostalgia*, exh. cat. (Chicago, 1992), 6–15.

reverent feelings. For they are symbolic; but only since the war broke out have I understood why I must repeatedly represent them anew in pictures."[21] The context of this passage implies that the yearning for calm and peace amidst anguish and disjunction accounts for Feininger's recurrent treatment of these subjects, surely as deeply felt symbols of stability.

That the circumstances of war in all their complexity helped to determine the subject, form, and meaning of *The Green Bridge II* makes it all the more fitting, if entirely coincidental, that circumstances of a later war determined its subsequent history.[22] By March 1938, the painting was owned by one of the leading Berlin dealers in contemporary German painting, Ferdinand Möller.[23] At that time it was included in a shipment of eighteen paintings by such artists as Kandinsky, Pechstein, and Schmidt-Rottluff to the Detroit Institute of Arts (two paintings by Dix had been sent late the previous year, and one was purchased by the museum). Möller had officially agreed to lend the works to the Detroit museum, but had in fact arranged that its director, W. R. Valentiner, would keep the works to protect them from the National Socialists' increasingly vehement and threatening attacks on modern art.

When Möller attempted to reclaim these works after the war's end, he was informed that the paintings had been confiscated in 1950 by the American government as enemy property. After many years of effort and after Möller's death in 1956, his widow, Maria Möller-Garny, succeeded in making a deal with the American government under which she would donate two paintings to American museums and buy back the remainder. In this way, *The Green Bridge II* entered the collection of the North Carolina Museum of Art, surely chosen by Mrs. Möller-Garny because Valentiner was then director of the institution. There it now hangs, a picture about France, painted by an American living in Germany during a war with France, "rescued" by an American museum directed by a German emigré, and donated to another American museum by another German because of another war. For all its lightness and charm, the burden of history weighs quite heavily on *The Green Bridge II*.

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21. Schreyer, 23. Certainly, bridges are a constant and oft-remarked presence in his oeuvre. For 1916, see, for example, two watercolors of 26 January and 29 September showing anglers on bridges (Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York [inv. no. 48.1172x16] and Museum of Modern Art, New York [inv. no. 258.64]). Incidentally, Feininger's stylistic and thematic debt to Paul Klee, as evidenced in these and similar watercolors of the period, has not yet been sufficiently explored.

22. The following details are taken from Eberhard Roters, *Galerie Ferdinand Möller: Die Geschichte einer Galerie für moderne Kunst in Deutschland, 1917–1956* (Berlin, 1984), 155f., 221–227.

23. Its previous owner was a certain Major Hülsmann in Berlin, who according to a directory of 1927, owned a large collection of paintings, prints, porcelains, furniture, and antiques (see Deuchler, 198). It is not known when Hülsmann acquired *The Green Bridge II* and another painting by Feininger of 1918 (Hess 191), or when both entered the possession of Ferdinand Möller. (The notation in Hess that Hülsmann also owned the 1916 version of *Newspaper Readers* [Hess 165] is surely mistaken, as this picture formed part of the artist's collection until his death.) Perhaps in confirmation that he did not see it as a major picture, *The Green Bridge II* seems not to have been exhibited by Feininger until late 1921, when it was included in an exhibition in Erfurt (according to information provided in conversation by Achim Moeller, New York).

PROVENANCE

Julia Feininger, artist's wife, Weimar, Germany; Maj. Hülsmann, Berlin, after 1930; Ferdinand Möller, Berlin, by 1938; to wife, Maria Möller-Garny, Cologne, n.d.; [on extended loan to the Detroit Institute of Arts, March 1938–December 1957]; given to NCMA, 1957.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Erfurt, Germany, Kunstvereinsheim, Verein fur Kunst und Kunstgewerbe, [oils, watercolors, and drawings, 1907–1921], opened 6 November 1921.

The Green Bridge II (fig. 1), detail

Dresden, Galerie Neue Kunst Fides, 1929.

Weimar, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar, Feininger Room, July 1929–November 1930.

Columbus, Ohio, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, "German Expressionism," 10 February–9 March 1961; catalogue, discussed 7, no. 10.

Detroit, Detroit Institute of Arts, "Lyonel Feininger: The Formative Years," 8–27 September 1964; catalogue, no. 138.

Munich, Haus der Kunst, "Lyonel Feininger," 24 March–13 May 1973, then traveling; catalogue, no. 90.

Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, "Masterpieces from the North Carolina Museum of Art," 11 March–13 April 1975.

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A "Gnostic" Triptych by Anselm Kiefer

John Hallmark Neff

In December 1986 the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam presented an exhibition of the most recent work of Anselm Kiefer, then forty-one, a West German on the verge of celebrity abroad though notorious at home for his searching reexaminations of his origins within the horrific legacy of recent German history. A number of important paintings were shown for the first time, including the large untitled triptych that is the subject of these notes (fig. 1).[1]

This triptych, on which Kiefer worked intermittently from 1980 to 1986, is one of his most enigmatic paintings, a work he concedes is "most ambiguous."[2] Although Kiefer has made other paintings with two or more panels or even consisting of three sections carefully reintegrated into one unified image, Raleigh's work appears to be only his second actual triptych thus far.[3] And unlike the 1973 exhibition, with its *Parsifal Room* installation, consisting of four related paintings of the artist's wooden attic studio, three composed as a triptych, Raleigh's triptych consists of three canvases of nearly identical size functioning as a self-sufficient composition.[4] That it is untitled and uninscribed within an oeuvre in which titles and handwritten words or texts play essential roles further suggests that this is an exceptional work to which the artist accorded special significance.[5]

Kiefer's themes and ambitions in this contentious object can only be introduced in the following notes.[6] But a hypothesis is proposed to suggest its complexity and legibility, and to relate it to Kiefer's larger project, his magnus opus, a collective quest of some thirty years' duration that interrelates to a remarkable degree each of his paintings, watercolors, photograph-based gouaches, sculptures, sculpture installations, and, not least, his extraordinary books. First, that his search for origins seems here to take the form of an oxymoron — a "Gnostic" triptych — an impossible altarpiece of blasted eerie beauty for a sect of religious iconoclasts with no tradition of art, sacred or otherwise.[7] Further, that this deconstruction seems to extend to the sacred his radical reinscriptions of other power symbols (such as transforming images of fascist architecture into anti-fascist memorials).[8] Finally, that this painting functions simultaneously, paradoxically, and appropriately as both metaphor and quite literal manifestation of his theme of spiritual (and material) transformation.

Acquired at auction in 1994 from the estate of Gerald S. Elliott, a Chicago collector known for his commitment to difficult work, for whom the artist reserved it,[9] *Untitled* is a particularly evocative example of Kiefer's ability to invent insistent physical objects to serve as symbolic vehicles for concepts of extreme subtlety and abstraction.

Fig. 1 Anselm Kiefer
German, born 1945
Untitled (Ohne Titel), 1980–86
Oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac, lead, charcoal, and straw mounted on photograph, mounted on canvas; with stones and lead and steel additions
Left panel: 130 1/4 x 73 in.
(330.8 x 185.4 cm)
Center panel: 130 5/8 x 72 5/8 in.
(331.8 x 184.5 cm)
Right panel: 130 1/4 x 72 7/8 in.
(330.8 x 185.1 cm)
Overall: 130 5/8 x 222 1/4 in.
(331.8 x 564.5 cm)
North Carolina Museum of Art
Purchased with funds from the State of North Carolina, W. R. Valentiner, and various donors, by exchange 94.3

1. *Anselm Keifer: Bilder 1986->1980*, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1986), cat. no. 31, illus. pp. 8 and 17 and in color pp. 82–83. Compare minor differences in placement of stones and funnel between Amsterdam and subsequent installations.

2. Conversation with the artist, 13 March 1996. Unless otherwise noted, paraphrases or quotations are from this and earlier conversations in 1987 cited in Neff, *Anselm Kiefer: Brüch und Einung* (New York: Marian Goodman Gallery, 1987, hereafter Neff 1987).

3. His interest in altarpiece-like paintings and tripartite images can be traced to his earliest works. *Continued on p. 88*

4. The *Parsifal Room* panels, 1973, are illustrated and discussed in Düsseldorf, 30–32. The so-called "London triptych" consists of *Parsifals III, I,* and *IV*, left to right. The installation was created for his punning "Der Nibelungen Leid" (The Sorrow of the Nibelungs) exhibition at the Galerie im Goethe-Institut/Provisorium, Amsterdam.

5. Neff 1987, 11 and n. 1.

6. The author is preparing a forthcoming book in which the triptych and other works will be analyzed more extensively and on additional levels of meaning beyond the scope of this article.

7. For a scholarly introduction to Gnosticism, see Giovanni Filoramo, *A History of Gnosticism*, trans. Anthony Alcock (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990). Also Richard T. Wallis, ed., *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism*, vol. 6, *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992). A less scholarly but evocative study is Jacques La Carrière, *The Gnostics*, foreword by Lawrence Durrell, trans. Nine Rootes (San Francisco: City Lights, 1989; Fr. ed. 1973).

8. See Mark Rosenthal's discussion in Chicago, 106–121.

9. Conversation with the artist, 13 March 1996.

By means of these emphatically hybrid objects that reject modernist notions of artistic purity or formalist perfection (another form of iconoclasm, a recurring Kiefer theme) he confronts fundamental issues of origins and survival, often with wry irony and humor.[10] Neither modern nor postmodern,[11] the triptych consists of a large overpainted photograph, molten lead spattered onto canvas, stones, lead and steel objects, and attachments. Stylistically it combines a broadly rendered wintry German landscape and other figurative elements with a surface informed by postwar abstraction and Arte Povera, which emphasize the direct and visible working of industrial materials. Resisting categorization, challenging viewer and other works of art alike, it is a most significant addition to the museum's collection.

Kiefer's first significant foreign exposure was the 1980 Venice Biennale, when he and Georg Baselitz were selected for the German Pavilion. (That year he began working on *Untitled*.) The resulting furor over his Germanic themes brought him to international attention if not acclaim. First abroad, then in West Germany, important museum exhibitions were organized and curated in close conjunction with Kiefer so that each installation and catalogue was a further extension of his project, inflecting and affirming its interconnectedness. That these exhibitions were temporary reinforced his view that meanings are provisional, contextual, and subject to change with each new combination of paintings, books, and other objects. Certain works he also reproduced in the catalogue in an unfinished state, a wry subversion of the "definitive" authority of museum publications.[12]

The subtitle of the Stedelijk exhibition, "Bilder 1986–>1980" (Paintings 1986–>1980), was characteristic of this process, inverting the normal, cumulative chronology to reflect the artist's retrospective process of reciprocal cross-referencing, linking objects old and new, years apart. Kiefer reopened previous readings of certain themes by reworking familiar images in new materials, and/or new media, and/or with often new and apparently contradictory titles, inscriptions, or no title at all.[13] In other instances, as with *Untitled*, he reworked older canvases, although this triptych was an exception in several respects. Over time we come to realize that each of Kiefer's works is simply one instant, one frame in an ongoing open-ended project of cinematic proportions that corresponds in real time to his life and works. Each image, substance, word, and process is seldom only what it appears to be but enjoys simultaneously a multivalent, often overdetermined existence.

As a strategy to keep his work aggressively in flux, open to chance and future changes (as with his books' purposive blank pages), his general method reflects a Gnosticized view of creation, of an imperfect world subject to endless beginnings and endings, a conflicted existence in which good confronts a powerful but not absolute evil in a quest to restore the original unity with a distant and absent divinity. This seems reflected

10. See Linda Hutcheon, "Provocation and Controversy: The Work of Anselm Kiefer," in *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London: Routledge, 1994), 101–115. She is a latecomer to Kiefer who had problems with the work; her discussion of "discursive communities" is a model for issues related to the necessity of understanding Kiefer's contextual references if one is to register the irony at work in his treatment of Germanic themes such as Wagnerian opera.

11. See Mark C. Taylor's analysis of Kiefer in relation to Barnett Newman and Andy Warhol in "Reframing Postmodernisms," in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick, eds. (London: Routledge, 1992), 11–29. See also Taylor's fine discussion of Kiefer in *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 290–307.

12. For Kiefer's parodies of home magazines, archaeological reports, textbooks, and a Donald Judd exhibition catalogue, see Neff 1987, esp. p. 8 and n. 4.

13. There are numerous examples. Compare, for example, the 1974 and 1991 variants of *Maikäfer flieg!* in Chicago, pl. 12, p. 33, and Berlin, cat. no. 38, pp. 88–89, respectively.

14. Cited in Chicago, 10.

15. The particular connotations of gray for Kiefer go beyond his use of lead in its various forms, though its presence as substance downplays Kiefer's decision to use it also symbolically as color, specifically as a mixture of the dualities of black and white. Gray is also a Christian color of mourning, spring, and Lent. Kiefer's interest in the early work of Jasper Johns may also be a factor in his extensive use of gray in the 1980s.

16. The term is that of literary critic Harold Bloom, whose *Kabbalah and Criticism* and studies of Blake, Yeats, and others are replete with Gnostic

in Kiefer's statement that there is no absolute truth, there are only interpretations[14]—and reinforced visually in his work, where we find neither pure black nor white but instead infinite shades of gray.[15]

Also typically Gnostic is to invert orthodox doctrine (such as the Fall told from the perspective of the serpent). Such purposeful "misreading"[16] is applied as a critical method to probe other, deeper meanings beneath the literal reading of received texts, as in such esoteric exegetical techniques as talmudic *gematria*.[17] This helps us to understand Kiefer's predilection for ambiguity and paradox, which defy facile closure and which in turn keep his work critically before us, renewing them with each reconsideration.[18] The blurring of concepts and terminology between esoteric and mystical traditions also contributes to this ambiguity, which Kiefer exploits as surely as he does lead or solarized photography. He emphasizes that he is not a scholar nor does he read as a scholar, but sees what he reads in terms of images, as an artist.[19] This said, Kiefer's Gnosticized concept and procedures, with their alchemical overtones of material and thematic transformation, seem also akin to the Jungian psychological process of individuation or integration of the unconscious and conscious.[20] (Jung himself regarded the Gnostics as the "virtual discoverers of 'depth psychology.'")[21]

Kiefer has been aware of Gnostic concepts since the 1960s when, as a student, he questioned institutionalized authority in all aspects of his life.[22] From the Greek *gnosis* or "knowledge" (as in a profound spiritual understanding of existence, not data), Gnosticism was a "philosophical-religious movement dedicated to personal salvation."[23] Without a central authority or text, Gnosticism encompassed an unusually diverse set of beliefs and practices: Christian, Jewish, ascetic, orgiastic, and so forth. Contemporaneous with early Christianity, Gnosticism shared with it many cosmogonic concepts and verbal imagery drawn from Neo-Platonism, Judaism, and Egyptian and Greek mystery religions, as well as elements of Manichaean dualism from Persia and beyond.

On the basis of surviving textual fragments, the early Gnostics of the second to third centuries are thought to have been a well-educated, affluent elite versed in Greek philosophy.[24] The darkly evocative imagery of Gnostic writers that has inspired later artists and writers such as Blake, von Kleist, Yeats, Hesse, Kafka, and Pynchon[25] has mostly survived in fragments and through the accounts of later Church fathers who denounced and persecuted them as "heretics." Kiefer's favorite appears to be Valentinus, the second-century Gnostic, whose descriptions of a "negative beauty" Kiefer much admires. Born in Alexandria, Valentinus established a school in Rome notable for its rationalism and moderation.

references. *The Book of J* and his latest books are studies of Gnosticism: *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) and *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996). He sees Gnosticism as the unrecognized system behind much contemporary religion, with its focus on individual divinity.

17. See discussion and further references in John Hallmark Neff, "Notes on Kabbalistic Ideas and Imagery," in *Negotiating Rapture: The Power of Art to Transform Lives*, Richard Francis and Sophia Shaw, eds. (Chicago: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 120–123.

18. See Frank Kermode, *Forms of Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), esp. 60 and 84–85 in relation to Kiefer.

19. Conversations with the artist, 1987 and 1996.

20. Kiefer's use of archetypal imagery suggests a Jungian parallel. See Neff 1987, n. 14 A useful new study by a Jungian psychoanalyst reaches a similar conclusion. See Rafael López-Pedraza, *Anselm Kiefer: The Psychology of "After the Catastrophe"* (New York: G. Braziller, 1996), 78.

21. Filoramo, xiv.

22. Conversations with the artist, 1987 and 1996.

23. W. L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion, Eastern and Western Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Humanities Press, Inc., 1980), 192–193.

24. Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), 75–76.

25. See Filoramo's introduction. Kiefer's primary source of Gnostic lore has apparently been indirect, from excerpts, not specialized texts. (Conversation

Fig. 2 Anselm Kiefer
Resurrexit, 1973
Oil, acrylic, and charcoal on burlap
114 3/16 x 70 7/8 in. (290 x 180 cm)
Collection Sanders, Amsterdam
Photograph courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art

A central tenet of Gnostic thought, subject to extremely subtle nuances of interpretation, linked the problematic origins of the world, the inherent corruption of all matter, and the role of evil. Reasoning that a worthy divinity could not have created a world of suffering, the early Gnostics concluded that Creation itself was the Fall, not the work of the true God but that of a secondary creator god or demiurge, "powerful but prone to blunder."[26] As a kind of premature intervention, preempting the Supreme and Unknowable divinity beyond comprehension, the sensible world was thus a cosmic mistake. Because the Unknowable was also distant and uninvolved, there could be no absolute good (or evil) but admixtures of both. Unlike Christian dualism, which radically opposed good and evil,[27] for the Gnostic they simply coexisted, evil one aspect of the former, more the complement of good than its antithesis, both essential to maintain the dynamic equilibrium of creative and destructive forces whose interactive transformation was life itself.

Although many popularized conceptions of Gnosticism play up its paranoiac dualities, many Gnostic sects evolved this in practice into a highly cosmopolitan ethos of reasonableness and openness to conflicting ideas. Discussion, reinterpretation, and amendment of beliefs were typical of the small Gnostic groups. Opposing views were overcome not with force but by persuasion. Simplistic either/or dualities were rejected "as merely mental categories that necessarily imply the other."[28]

Instead, from cosmic model to earthly copy, existence was conceived in terms of triads. The Gnostic cosmology was organized with an intermediary state buffering the two extremes, a middle way with clear affinities to the Chinese doctrine of yin-yang which Kiefer has symbolized in early work such as *Resurrexit* ("He is risen") of 1973 (fig. 2), where heaven/earth, upper/lower, ascension/descension, male/female, white/black, and so forth are metaphorically evoked by his imagery and symbolic placement. (The unusual two-canvas format terminating in a blunted pyramid is also suggestive of an altarpiece with its outer wings folded over the center panel.)

The tripartite structure was all-encompassing. Within the divine hierarchy it extended from the invisible world of the Pleroma ("fullness"), to which all light/spirit sought to return, to the visible, material world of generation, the two mediated by Sophia or "Wisdom." On a societal scale it descended from the pneumatic or higher spiritual level (the Gnostic elect), through the psychic level of lower soul or spirit (identified with the True Church), down to the hylic or material plane of pagans, gentiles, and Jews. The celestial model extended even to the eye, which, because it "lives on light," is the only bodily aperture that "escapes corruption." The white eyeball, on the circumference, corresponds to the Pleroma; the colored iris to the psychic dimension; the black pupil at center to the hylic abyss.[29]

with the artist, 1996.) Gnosticism had been a German scholarly specialty prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls or so-called Gnostic Gospels in Palestine in 1945. It was also of particular interest to Jung, who assembled the leading Gnostic specialists at his annual gatherings at Ascona. See also Dwight Eddins, *The Gnostic Pynchon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

26. John P. Anton, "Theourgia-Demiourgia: A Controversial Issue in Hellenistic Thought and Religion," in Wallis, 15.

27. See A. H. Armstrong, "Dualism: Platonic, Gnostic, and Christian," in Wallis, 37.

28. Pagels, 71.

29. La Carrière, 45.

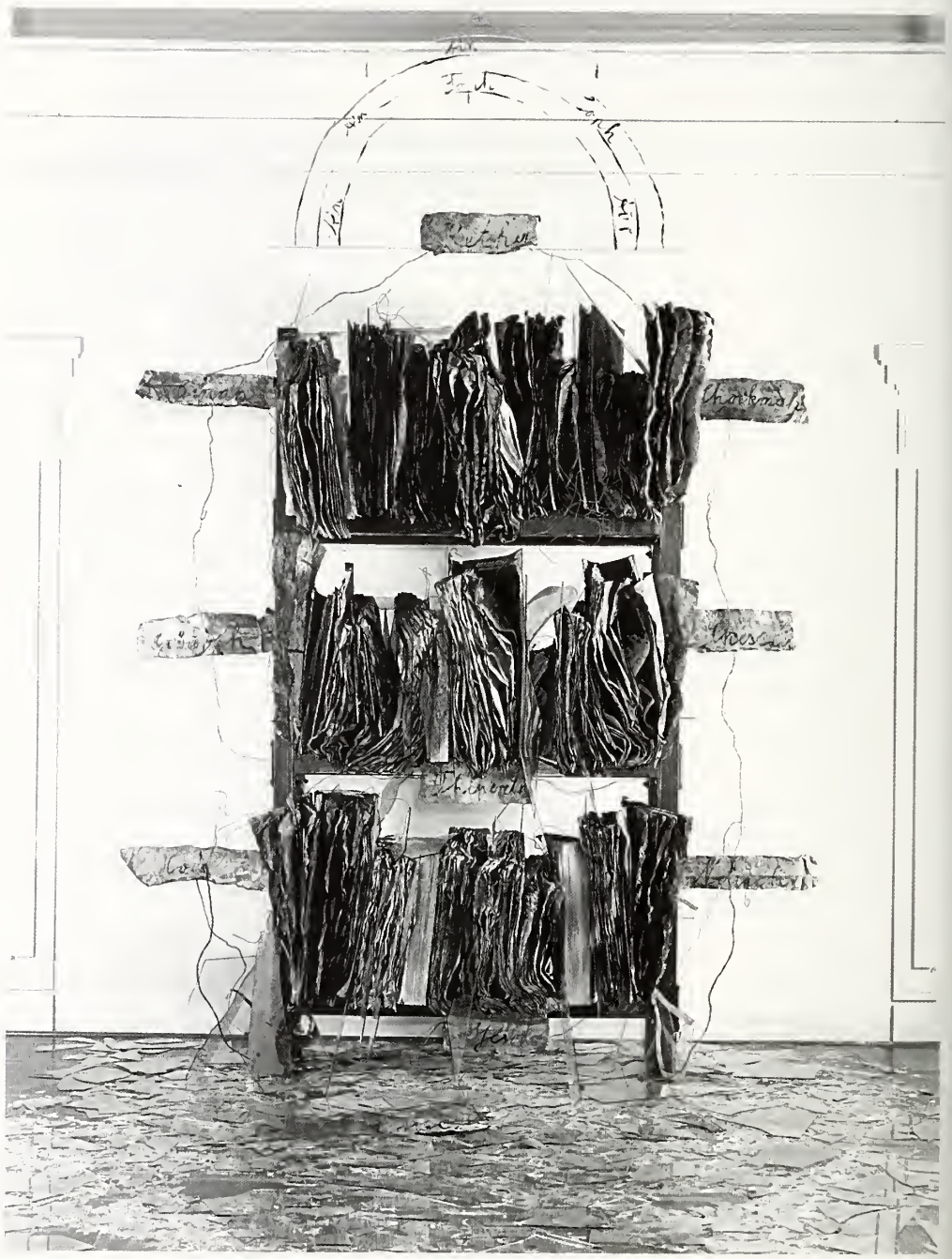


Fig. 3 Anselm Kiefer
Breaking of the Vessels (Bruch der Gefässe), 1989–90
Lead books on steel shelves, with lead, copper wire, iron, charcoal, glass, and polymer
Approximately 149 x 135 x 57 in. (378.5 x 343 x 144.8 cm)
The St. Louis Art Museum
Purchase: Funds given by 34 contributors, listed p. 89.

The cosmic disaster, the Gnostic counterpart to the later kabbalistic concept of the Breaking of the Vessels[30] (which Kiefer has likened to ecological disasters) scattered the divine emanations of pure spirit or light throughout the world, in the process corrupting it with matter or darkness (fig. 3). This rupture of what had been perfect engendered a timeless battle waged between good and evil (light and darkness) to purify and restore the divine substance to the heavenly Pleroma and thereby to end the exile of separation. The collection, purification, and restoration of the divine substance made a reciprocal process linking heaven to earth in which matter would be refined as the initiate gradually acquired gnosis by ascending through the twelve Eons or levels that separated the world from the Pleroma. This was an archetypal quest in which one was tested at each level by evil Archons with no assurance of success.[31] Once the world was purified — matter transformed into spirit — the stage was set for Christ to return to save the elect, a redemption, however, that by definition could be effected only after death, following the destruction of the material body.

The material, sensible world and all of its creations were thus inherently flawed, condemned to endless repetitions of creation and destruction. The Gnostics, in yet another inversion of Christian doctrine that saw in each aspect of creation the reflection of divine perfection, regarded all of nature, including the human body, as corrupt. Sharing many beliefs with their neighbors, the Gnostics were nevertheless critical of certain Christian beliefs and rituals and shunned the use of images and sacred buildings, which as material objects profaned the divinity. The cross they despised as a symbol of Christ's suffering. Nor, as an initiated elite, did the Gnostics require didactic visual aids: Gnostic tolerance did not extend to images.

Instead, because the material world served the Gnostic only as the stage for the drama of salvation, ritual initiation replaced the more passive contemplation of images. Through the symbolic reenactments the participating initiate acquired gnosis as self-knowledge, the goal of the spiritual quest. This personal acting out as the means of self-knowledge or understanding should be compared to Kiefer's early "actions" or performances, especially the controversial *Besetzungen* or "Occupations" in which he posed in front of various European tourist sites giving a mock Hitler salute. (It is also clearly related to Jungian theories of reenactment.) The highly charged and ambivalent morality of many of Kiefer's subjects and images constitutes the risk he undertakes to confront his own Shadow (or Jungian dark side) in what has been described as the "gray zone" where absolute good and evil do not exist.[32] Risking serious misunderstanding through these very public activities as an artist, Kiefer sought to experience, to test (if not actually to know) how he might have acted had he lived during the Nazi period.

30. For a discussion of this concept of the Lurianic Kabbalah in relation to Kiefer's work, see Doreet LeVitte Harten, "Canticle for a God Unknown," in *Anselm Kiefer: Lilith* (New York: Marian Goodman, 1992).

31. Compare the popular children's boardgame Snakes and Ladders, "derived from . . . a game used in India for religious instruction. The Hindu sages taught that 'pap' (good) and 'punya' (bad) exist side by side and that virtuous behavior, represented by ladders, helped the individual to progress toward the ultimate perfection or 'Nirvana.'" See R. C. Bell, *The Boardgame Book* (Los Angeles: The Knapp Press, 1979), 134–135. Apparently such games were sold in Germany in the 1960s in counterculture shops. If Kiefer knew such games is unknown, but they present an interesting parallel to his imagery and intent in *Untitled*.

32. See Steven Ungar, "Gray Zones: Vichy, Maurice Blanchot, and the Problem of Aftereffect," in Nancy A. Harrowitz, ed., *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 193–209. Ungar makes the case for tolerating a gray zone where ethical issues remain open to further debate. See also the essay by Robert Gibbs, "Reading Heidegger: Destruction, Thinking, Return," also in Harrowitz, esp. 167 in relation to Kiefer's task.

The range of Gnostic beliefs can only be alluded to here, but their appeal and subsequent threat to authority are demonstrated by the persecution of latter-day Gnostics as heretics by the dominant True Church and the utter destruction of the thriving Gnostic communities of the Bogomils in Bosnia and the Cathars (or Albigensians) in southern France in the thirteenth century. Employing the history of iconoclastic controversies as an index of tolerance — as in his *Bilderstreit* variations — Kiefer appears to suggest that tolerance and intolerance are historically contextual and non-exclusive virtues, subject to change.

Eschewing linear notions of progress, Kiefer describes his project in terms of ripples spreading outward from a center (himself); later he extends the concept dimensionally as an outwardly ascending spiral. Within this dynamic his work "progresses" not by leaving themes behind for more "advanced" ones but by accretion. Keifer literally builds on them as they cyclically recur. Temporally he enriches them with historic references preceding or following 1945, his year of birth. Geographically, his themes have expanded outward from Germany to the Middle East and most recently the Americas and India.

Yet there is invariably some connection to his own origins, some detail or evocative association, that relates a work on some level to Kiefer himself and to Germany. These might be linguistic archaisms or puns in any of four or five languages or in his choice of materials, such as lead. Or it may be the chance interjection of current events that refocuses and thereby transforms his archetypal images, a process of multilayering he refers to as "reverse archaeology." The work thus functions not unlike a pair of binoculars (lenses and frame) viewed simultaneously and/or alternatively from both ends. (Perspectives, points of view, and surveillance are other Kiefer leitmotives.)

Diachronic or historic time merges into a single continuum of fundamental themes reconsidered in synchronic permutation. For example, the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown of 1986 immediately triggered for Kiefer images from Jules Verne's science fiction overlaid with those of Egyptian solar deities and kabbalistic apocalypse. In images of a model reactor in his studio or a mastaba reminiscent of a nuclear pile, he evokes a linkage of history and myth suggesting that our ambition to channel natural forces with technology is an illusion.[33] Spatially, temporally, his is a vision more appropriately explicated in hypertext than in linear print.

Yet when we are aware of Kiefer's visual language — of the privileging of ascension; the center; viewer's right over viewer's left; lighter, warmer tones; the lightening, filtering, or refinement of matter into more "spiritual" (or less raw) states — his system of visual metaphors for the Gnostic's psychic transformation is as legible as the sculpture program of a medieval portal.

33. Neff 1987, esp. 58–60.

Triptychs

Triptychs as a genre are as overdetermined a format as exists in Western art, a potential cliché predisposing the viewer to anticipate meaning without necessarily engaging with it. The triptych's frequent, sometimes facile, adoption by other artists, as well as Kiefer's pleasure in frustrating expectations, perhaps explain the belated appearance of this one. But as an instrument of public address carrying the most private of themes, the triptych has a potential for paradox that clearly intrigued him.

The winged polyptych or triptych as high altar in the early sixteenth century in northern Europe, for example, has been aptly described as both a "machine" and a stage. As symbolic microcosms of the universe, centered within a church itself so symbolized, the most elaborate altars of the Counter-Reformation seem to have incorporated the highest technology and ingenuity of the day to attract and to educate their audience. With programmatic narratives, sculpted and/or painted on movable sets of wings, changed to accord with the liturgical calendar, perhaps even with musical automata, the high altar functioned very much as would a contemporary hybrid combining theater, billboard, cinema, library, and interactive large-screen computer. Perhaps the most notable example is the Isenheim Altarpiece, a work that has had particular significance for German artists such as Max Beckmann (who, it seems, also incorporated Gnostic imagery into his famous triptychs).[34]

A winged or so-called flying altar like the Isenheim Altarpiece comprised multiple parts, a highly symbolic microcosmic structure representing the divine Anthropos: the center panel his body (or *Corpus*), each side panel a wing (*ein Flügel*). The carved or painted panel beneath the *Corpus* was *der Sarg* (coffin/casket), emphasizing "the inextricable association between grave and altar in the Catholic liturgy,"[35] the altar serving as manger at Christmas (birth) and tomb at Easter (death and resurrection). Surmounting the center panel are the carved and Gothic spires of the *Auszug*, meaning departure or Exodus. Its shape and gilding symbolize the ascension of the spirit. (But as a railway station sign *Auszug* evokes the trains to the death camps. Lanzmann's film *Shoah* contains an unforgettable image of the railway tracks converging on Auschwitz, an image perhaps referenced in Kiefer's *Eisen-Steig* [Iron-Path, fig. 4] of 1986.)

The wings were opened and closed in narrative combinations determined by the liturgical calendar and local practice. The sequential viewing of the Isenheim Altarpiece's different parts has been described in terms of three states, each corresponding to a set of desired devotional responses according to the respective skill of each worshipper. In the open state, the triptych was to be actively examined and deciphered in detail; in the middle state, the worshipper assumed a gradual visual fixation leading into a

34. I am indebted to Andrée Hayum's important study, *The Isenheim Altarpiece: God's Medicine and The Painter's Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). She includes a chapter on the legacy of this altarpiece, including comments on Beckmann. See also Margot Clark, "Beckmann and Esoteric Philosophy," in the very useful catalogue *Max Beckmann: The Triptychs* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1980), 33–36.

35. Hayum, 165.

Fig. 4 Anselm Kiefer
Iron-Path (Eisen-Steig), 1986
Oil, acrylic, and emulsion on canvas, with olive branches, iron, and lead
86 5/8 x 149 5/8 in. (220 x 380 cm)
Mr. and Mrs. David Pincus
Photograph courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art

trance-like frame of mind; and in the final state, with the wings closed, the viewer was to recall the entire narrative contemplatively, to link annunciation to crucifixion to resurrection. This third stage was an internalized, primarily mental form of visualization no longer tied to its material source.[36]

On first viewing, Kiefer's triptych, too, seems almost traditional: an apparent Last Judgment, a theme particularly suited to triptychs, with the saved dramatically separated off to God's right (viewer's left), the damned to God's left. The artist and others have described the centrifugal flow across the three panels as an image of spiritual transformation. Kiefer has suggested that the spatters of molten lead around the sieve at right constitute a later stage of refinement of the cluster of six lead-splashed stones seemingly ascending together to the viewer's left (fig. 5).

Fig. 6 Center panel of *Untitled* (fig. 1)

Fig. 5 Left panel of *Untitled* (fig. 1), detail

At center (fig. 6) the lead ladder with twelve rungs suspended from a piece of pipe would seem to suggest the uncertain risks of spiritual ascension (and descension) to heaven (or, as proposed here, to the Gnostic's Pleroma, which begins with the thirteenth Eon at the horizon line). As an instrument of the Passion, the ladder may also stand for Christ as well as the cross. The ambiguous identity of the snake, alternately and simultaneously fertility, death, wisdom, or evil as Satan, is well known to many cultures. This snake, coiled to strike outward, is one of many serpents that inhabit Kiefer's work, from the world-encircling *Midgard* serpent (fig. 7) to the snakes and stones that Kiefer imagines to be of celestial origin and with which he calls up the *Order of Angels* (fig. 8) to the tiny "snake" IUDs or contraceptive coils of bent plastic-covered wire that appear pasted over landscape photographs in his early books on the theme of Barren Landscape.[37]

Serpent lore is endless. It is worth pointing out, however, that in addition to differentiating his serpents heraldically by their activity, Kiefer localizes his cosmic crises by including the common European adder or *Kreuzotter* (Cross Adder). Identified by its distinctive lozenge-pattern markings of black and white, which form another ladder up its back, or the yin-yang, it is known also as "Hell Adder" (*Hellotter*), exemplifying thereby yet another example of the reconciliation of opposites, as within the oneness of the divine.

36. Hayum, 115.

37. Examined by the author in Buchen in June 1987.

Originating as one of many large, usually horizontal, photograph-based paintings of the countryside near his studio in Buchen (Baden-Württemberg) that he made in the late 1970s and early 1980s (such as figs. 8 and 9), *Untitled*'s precursor was unaccountably trisected vertically into nearly equal parts, each of which Kiefer says he attempted, unsuccessfully, to develop as an independent painting. Kiefer's initial failure and subsequent improvisation are parallel to the Gnostic's imperfect creation. His procedures and the resulting triptych — first one, then three, then three-as-one — may also be a more subtle variation on his notable earlier works from the 1970s on the theme of the Christian Triune God or Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The shadowy, wintry landscape that serves as the site of Kiefer's cosmic drama is at least three landscapes in one, which manifest rather literally the Gnostic notion of three principles: a very large black-and-white landscape photograph glued to the canvas, which was Kiefer's original image; the painted landscape with which Kiefer obscured it; and the subsequent atmospheric reworking with blowtorch and lead of the painted landscape (and serpent), after which the six lead-covered stones, lead ladder, and lead funnel/ sieve were added. In its order of making and substance, the triptych's schema seems a wry parody of the Gnostic eyeball: the underlying landscape photograph, an image created by light (so therefore spiritualized and most distant), is overpainted, or obscured, with earthen pigments, the whole topped with base metals and stones, a massive cosmic sandwich. That this photograph is now effectively invisible further reinforces its identity with

Fig. 7 Anselm Kiefer
Midgard, 1980 – 85
Oil, acrylic, emulsion, and shellac on photograph, mounted on canvas (in three parts)
142 x 237 3/4 in. (360 x 604 cm)
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Museum Purchase: Gift of Kaufmann's, the Women's Committee, and the Fellows of the Museum of Art, 85.62
Photograph by Richard A. Stoner Photography

Fig. 8 Anselm Kiefer
Order of Angels (Die Ordnung der Engel), 1983–84
Oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac, and straw on canvas, with cardboard and lead
130 x 218 1/2 in. (330 x 555 cm)
The Art Institute of Chicago
Restricted gift of the Nathan Manilow Foundation, and Lewis and Susan Manilow; Samuel A. Marx Fund, 1985.243

the Unseen, its existence beneath the savaged paint a matter of faith.

Kiefer's interest in creating meaning on multiple levels extends also to his use of language in multilingual puns, homophones, and archaisms, including puns on his own name in titles (*Maikäferflieg, Kyffhäuser*). Even Anselm: the poet Paul Celan, whose *Todesfuge* or "Death Fugue" and other poems feature prominently in Kiefer's work of the early 1980s, was born Paul Antschel or, variously, Ancel; his transposition of the letters of his name to effect a new identity after surviving the death camps has been described as his shortest poem.[38]

Kiefer's simple transpositions may completely transform the meaning of an image and its associations, as when he changed "Song of the Nibelungs" to "Sorrow of the Nibelungs" (*Lied* to *Leid*), deconstructing a favorite Wagnerian image of German nationalists to one of remorse and remembrance.[39] He did the same with the name given to the sixth-century writer known as Pseudo-Dionysius, who forged writings in the name of the first-century Dionysius the Areopagite (meaning judge, from *Areopagus*, or "Ares's hill," site of the Athenian judicial court). These writings formed an influential textual basis for angelic lore in the West. By transposing two letters, Kiefer creates "Aeropagite," a bogus etymology that supports a range of aeronautical and angelic imagery, from lead propellers, planes, and rockets to winged angels. Kiefer's verbal and visual punning is more than simply clever; it reinforces the Areopagite's descriptions of the mystic's spiraling ascent through the angelic orders.

Fig. 9 Anselm Kiefer
Seraphim, 1983–84
Oil, straw, emulsion, and shellac on canvas, with woodcut
130 1/4 x 126 1/4 in. (331 x 321 cm)
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Purchased with funds contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Andrew M. Saul, 1984
Photograph by David Heald ©The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

Hence the significance of Kiefer's *Untitled* (more emphatic in the German *Ohne Titel*, "without title"). It has been suggested that the ambiguity of the painting precluded the artist from naming it.[40] We may cite also the tradition of taboos against uttering God's names and the Gnostic belief that names were deceptive illusions. But in the context of a divinity unknowable, ineffable, invisible, perhaps to be nameless is to be named after all. For whether this triptych is primarily Catholic, alchemical, Egyptian, or Gnostic is finally not of critical importance because it is simultaneously all of them and more, just as any symbol consists of its accreted layers of history and use (like the etymologies of words, for example, that Kiefer surely mines in dictionaries). Naming it, however, fixing its identity, would be a form of separation, even exile, from other, potential meanings.

38. Neff 1987, n. 1, p. 13.

39. Nicholas Serota, "Anselm Kiefer: *Les Plaintes d'un Icare*," in *Anselm Kiefer* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1981), 23.

40. Chicago, 138.

For Kiefer, punning is not the lowest form of humor but a creative doubling of his resources, of potential resonance, of ambiguity, a characteristic that recommended puns to the Gnostic minority as well. Kiefer's punning on the triptych's pair of flanking wings, taken together with the *Corpus* or "body" of its central panel (whose ladder implies human presence), transforms the ensemble into another of his symbolic angels. (Their opening and closing are echoed in two other meanings of *der Flügel*: "casement window" and "grand piano.")

The lead funnel (*der Trichter*, fig. 10) that Kiefer turns into a sieve (*das Sieb*) at right by covering it with a piece of wire screen (*das Netz*), which effects the filtering of base matter, suggests another set of puns verbal and visual that link the triptych in most inventive ways with traditional iconography. An altar cloth suspended behind the high altar is called a *dossol*; if the cloth is extended to the sides they become "riddles," the textile equivalent of the triptych's wings. To riddle means "to pierce with holes" (such as "riddled" with corruption or anxiety) as well as "to puzzle." While a sieve is used to refine materials such as flour, a *Gros Sieb* (large sieve) designates "a coarse-meshed sieve" or "riddle" used to separate corn from chaff, sand from gravel, ash from cinders. In the context of an altarpiece, with its depictions of the Last Judgment, the riddle seems to symbolize also the weighing of souls. Kiefer's fabricated riddle puns on its location: Kiefer's placing of it in the lower center of the right wing (the left hand of God) suggests that this mundane tool serves as a subtle and at least threefold symbol of the Archangel Michael, privileged by God to sound "the last trump" or trumpet that heralds the last resurrection.[41]

Fig. 10 Right panel of *Untitled* (fig. 1), detail

Michael serves also as "the weigher of souls." (This function he shares with his pagan prefiguration, Mercury, as well as with Osiris, both deities linked through alchemical lore, as Kiefer well knows. Osiris and Saturn, with whom Mercury is linked and is sometimes synonymous, are the subject of a number of Kiefer's major works.) The funnel's shape evokes the trumpet; the metal screen, the balance or scales used to weigh one's soul, thereby to separate "the sheep from the goats," the saved from the damned. (The verb *sieben*, "to sieve," also connotes "to select by

41. It is, of course, a risk to read too much into Kiefer's work, to be overly caught up in the interconnectedness and detail of the traditions and themes he has chosen (in itself a measure of the resources he brings to his project). How much of this did Kiefer intend? How much that he didn't intend would he accept as compatible or a legitimate extension of what he did do? There is also a temptation to go only so far, which can diminish the work.

With this in mind I refer to a conversation about the triptych in which Kiefer described the funnel-shaped object as "a shape to direct and focus, to concentrate forces, 'as for hearing.'" This suggested to me later an old-fashioned hearing aid, or "ear-trumpet," the kind of allusion Kiefer finds amusing for the reciprocal yin-yang of its shape as both source and receptor of sound. Finally, to suggest that reading Kiefer this closely may not be entirely misguided is his entitling of a large 1996 landscape painting, scattered with thousands of sunflower seeds, *The Sixth Trump*. See *Anselm Kiefer: I Hold All India In My Hand*, essay by Thomas McEvilly (London: Anthony D'Offay, 1996), 6, for his most recent images from the Americas and India. See also *Del Paisaje a la Metáfora: Anselm Kiefer en México, Pinturas y Libros del Artista Alemán*, text by Robert Littman (Mexico City: Centro Cultural Arte Contemporáneo, 1996).

examining." And the Gnostics, who believed that only they would be saved on Judgment Day, regarded scripture as allegorical text to be freely interpreted as riddles.)

Kiefer's triptych — all ten by eighteen feet by half a ton — uses its sacred format, somber tonalities, and lead objects to pun visually on its weighty eschatological themes and spiritual enlightenment. The model ladder of lead strips, here visually and physically linking earth (serpent/knowledge/science) to heaven (received wisdom) — the twelve rungs reach to the high horizon line where the heavenly zone of the Pleroma commences at Eon number thirteen. It is yet another of Kiefer's visual oxymorons for spiritual ascent: lead wings, lead propellers, lead aircraft, and lead rockets for starters. Impossible objects, they parody the concept of the reconciliation of opposites. (The composite lead funnel/sieve/filter/riddle in the right panel, itself improvised from a leftover propeller spinner, is another symbolic vehicle of transformation, like Kiefer's snakeskins and intestine casings, which appeared almost interchangeably in the late 1980s.)[42]

These are also his updated counterparts for the fiery chariot, or Ezekiel's wheel, symbols for dynamic spiritual ascent. Even the six stones, splashed with lead, seem on ascendant course, caught in the centrifugal flow of darker and lighter zones across the three vertical panels that circumscribes an unusual horizontal mandala at center. The combination of four primary images (ladder, filter, serpent, and stones) on three panels seems reminiscent of Jung's four-part mandala and his belief that quaternity, not trinity, is the symbol of wholeness.[43]

As concept and practice this triptych seems also consistent with Gnostic (and other) texts describing the cosmogonic myth in terms of liquid metaphor, of flowing emanations, a feminized organic birth, a cosmogony "grown" and formless in contrast to the structured, fabricated world of the masculinized archetypal "cosmic potter."[44] In this perspective, Kiefer's atypical dissection of his original canvas would seem another Gnostic flaw because he usually recycled his failed paintings by composting them in large dumpsters, harvesting and using the fragments as large-scale collage, less "paintings" than vestigial images, a residue rife with allusion. Kiefer's triptych, not unlike Warhol's *Oxidation Paintings* and Polke's toxic triptychs, is both "made" and "grown," still evolving. As a hybrid assemblage of diverse materials and often conflicting processes, images, and things, *Untitled* follows the Gnostic middle road, a condition attributed to the postmodern. For instance, Kiefer's encrusted pigments of refined organic earths and minerals replicate literally in relief, as well as figuratively, the landscape terrane. His materials are seldom if ever displaced by the images they create; their tangible, tactile identities as stuff never succumb completely to illusion.

As a further, Gnostic inversion of our operative standards of beauty and condition, this strange triptych (already several times transformed) is still "unfinished,"

42. See Berlin, cat. no. 36, *Die Himmelsleiter* (The Heavenly Ladder), 1991, for a snakeskin suspended vertically from the top to bottom of the canvas, and, p.154, an illustration of *Schwarze Galle* (Black Gall), 1989, the alleged source of one of the Four Temperaments, here the melancholic, saturnine temperament associated with artists. The translucent intestine casing is arranged across a sheet of lead like one of Kiefer's "astral-serpents." A variation of this composition, *A.D.* (for Albrecht Dürer), which combines the intestine with a chalk drawing of Dürer's rhombohedron from his famous engraving, *Melencolia I* (1514), is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. See also Neff 1987, pp. 10–11 and notes 13–16.

43. See C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968 [1944]), 25–26.

44. Patricia Cox Miller, " 'Plenty Sleeps There': The Myth of Eros and Psyche in Plotinus and Gnosticism," in Wallis, 232–234.

still "open to history," as a consequence of its "inherent vice" (a conservator's euphemism for the self-destructive properties intrinsic to certain materials but a Gnostic concept if ever there was one). *Untitled*, by virtue of its theme of last things, is a more apocalyptic variation of Kiefer's many "open" books. The triptych paradoxically, perversely, "completes" itself through its slow but ineluctable material dissolution, sloughing its skin like a snake (a traditional symbol of rebirth and resurrection). Meaning and disintegration are linked, the former achieving its full import as concept even as the material object dissipates, denying closure by theoretically engendering a new cycle of works from the detritus.

In retrospect it is possible to see the Gnostic concepts throughout Kiefer's project (reaffirming that "Gnostic" can mean many and often contradictory things). His works affirm, for example, a model of openendedness, of multivalent and multilayered meanings, the coexistence of mutually exclusive concepts responding to changing needs. Kiefer has expressed a conception of existence that he explains in terms of an ongoing process of cyclic transformations, of multiple beginnings and endings. He has described this in terms of an outward spiral or of ripples spreading outward from a fixed center (the artist standing in the water).This is a concept shared with Neo-Platonism and other belief systems of late antiquity that reject the notion of a single creation or the end of time. Like the Gnostics, Kiefer appears to reject the illusion of closure, the hierarchic finality of either/or dualities. He regards such choices as false, an illusion of the possibility of absolute purity or wholeness that separates one belief from another, risking intolerance and disaster.

If traditional triptychs convey desired outcome and dire consequences in no uncertain terms, there is no such reassurance in *Untitled*. Instead we see a contaminated landscape perhaps beyond repair. There are no clear winners or losers — there seems to be no one at all. Here we seem to have a triptych — the vehicle for the central image of the Counter-Reformation (then engaged in "a war of images" with an iconoclasticizing Protestantism) — reinscribed with symbols ambiguous but contextually consistent with the Gnostic "heretics" whom the early Church vigorously suppressed. That these iconoclasts were massacred in part for their criticism of church corruption, including the use of images, is doubly ironic and suggests that it would be premature to view *Untitled* merely as a kind of coy heresy, for surely it is as secular as sacred, directly linked, as always, to his project, to the recovery of identity from exile.

As an artist born in Germany, Kiefer has said that he does not have the option to deal only with art history but must deal with "real history."[45] In his work he has been likened to an alchemist, a stage designer,[46] a film director, a storyteller, and most recently a psychologist. But he is also pre-eminently an extraordinary teacher with a gift for healing, an ambition that makes some critics very nervous. His project sometimes walks a thin line, risking portentousness, even kitsch, the ridiculous rather than the sublime. But in

45. Conversations with the artist, May–June 1987. It should be added, however, that since his move to southern France after the reunification of Germany in 1990, Keifer has resisted being identified as a "German" artist, including refusing to participate in exhibitions organized according to the artists' countries of origin.

46. Adam Gopnik proposes that "the deepest roots of his art lie in German theatrical design of the twenties — in Adolphe Appia," in "Alchemist" (The Art World), *The New Yorker* (21 November 1988): 138.

doing so he attempts to make works of art that have meaning beyond the studio or museum.

Through his invention of particularly resonant symbols such as this one, Kiefer compels us to move beyond literal appearance and habit, to risk engagement with it and work it through. As in his own controversial reenactment of fascist taboo, he dares us to bring our experience of his work and its ideas onto the conscious level and into memory. Unlike the Gnostic minority, for whom metaphorical ambiguity was also a means to avoid detection, Kiefer exploits this ambivalence in his work to attract it. His uneasy altarpiece challenges our direct participation as well as the reflection his themes demand if we are to comprehend them and the personal choices they symbolically exact.

John Hallmark Neff, formerly director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, is now director and chief curator of the Terra Museum of American Art, also in Chicago. His *Anselm Kiefer: Brüch und Einung* appeared in 1987.

3. *Continued from p. 71* Born and raised a Catholic, though now apparently non-practicing, he spent three weeks in 1966 at the Dominican monastery La Tourette at Eveux, near Lyons (the building was designed by Le Corbusier in the late 1950s). His purpose was to see how a modern artist could successfully translate sacred concepts. (One is tempted to compare the spare concrete structures of the monastery imprinted by the formwork with the broad expanses of sheet lead Kiefer employed in such works as cat. nos. 20–22, 26, 30, 37, 41 in *Anselm Kiefer*, exh. cat. [Berlin: Nationalgalerie Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1991, hereafter Berlin].) Kiefer's earliest work is replete with images that mix Teutonic and Catholic symbols—shamen, initiates, saints, crucifixes, and angels—the beginning of his working through Western and other religious traditions. Kiefer has found images for concepts in Jewish and Christian mysticism, for example, seldom attempted by visual artists.

His 1977 "Autobiography," reprinted in English in *Anselm Kiefer* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1987, hereafter Chicago), 11, lists "Paintings on Trinity, Quaternity, above-below, I-Thou" immediately after "Study with Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf." Beuys, who openly identified himself as a kind of Christian shaman, assisted his own teacher, Ewald Mataré (1887–1965) with the new south portal doors of the Cologne Cathedral (circa 1951) and integrated spiritual concepts directly into his work. See Ewald Mataré, *Retrospective das Plastische Werk* (Cologne: Kölnsicher Kunstverein, 1987), 47. See also Friedhelm Mennekes, *Beuys zu Christus/ Beuys on Christ* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk Gmbh., 1989). Kiefer's Raleigh triptych may be, among other things, an homage to Beuys, who died on 23 January 1986 (see n. 6).

In the early 1970s, Kiefer made several diptychs as well as irregularly shaped two-part canvases, some consisting of two rectangular canvases, often with the smaller centered above the larger. With his triptychs in mind, these earlier works resemble the shapes of closed altarpieces, their wings folded over the center panel, suggesting the imaginary existence of three additional panels beneath, whose connection to what we actually see is left to our imagination. See the 1973 *Father, Son, Holy Ghost* in *Anselm Kiefer*, annotated catalogue by Jürgen Harten (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1984, hereafter Düsseldorf), fig. 3, p. 22, and in color Chicago, pl. 9, p. 27. It is perhaps significant that these two-part paintings frequently feature religious imagery and are often untitled. See Chicago, fig. 20, p. 18.

The existence of triptych-like images within other paintings such as triple windows, doors, openings, and mirrors is not unusual. See Chicago, figs. 23, 76; pls. 57, 62. He has also made a number of very large singular works consisting of two or three canvases joined closely together, perhaps to facilitate shipping and to distribute their considerable weight. See *Midgard* (fig. 7). Altarpieces and their narrative and associative potential clearly interest him. He displayed in an unfinished state a large canvas reminiscent of Warhol's *Oxidation Paintings* or so-called "piss paintings" mounted upon a large metal stand positioned in the gallery adjacent to one of his large, reliquary-like lead aircraft (which as vehicles of mediation and transformation function as contemporary angels). See Berlin, cat. nos. 24, 54, pp. 68–69, 146–147. Even his monumental library installations of lead books and glass function like altars, whether as standing sefirothic trees from the Kabbalah or standing like open books and evoking triptychs.

PROVENANCE

Gerald S. Elliott, Chicago; Elliott Estate sale, Christie's, New York, 2 November 1994, lot 16; sold to NCMA.

EXHIBITION HISTORY

Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum, "Anselm Kiefer: Bilder 1986->1980," 20 December 1986 – 8 February 1987; catalogue, no. 31, illus. 8, 17, and 82 – 83.

Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, "Anselm Kiefer," 5 December 1987 – 31 January 1988, then traveling; catalogue, discussed 138, listed 169, illus. pl. 78.

Center panel of *Untitled* (fig. 1), detail

Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, and La Grande Halle, La Villette, "Magiciens de la Terre," 18 May – 14 August 1989; not in catalogue.

Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago, "Affinities and Intuitions: The Gerald S. Elliott Collection of Contemporary Art," 12 May – 29 July 1990; catalogue, discussed 152 – 153, no. 70, illus. pl. 98.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

J. W. C. [John W. Coffey]. "Anselm Kiefer's *Untitled* Triptych." North Carolina Museum of Art *Preview* (Winter 1994 – 95): cover, 2 – 5, illus.

Complete credit listing for *Breaking of the Vessels* (fig. 3)

The St. Louis Art Museum

Purchase: Funds given by Mr. and Mrs. George Schlapp, Mrs. Francis A. Mesker, Henry L. and Natalie Edison Freund Charitable Trust, Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation, Marilyn and Sam Fox, Mrs. Eleanor J. Moore, Mr. and Mrs. John Wooten Moore, Donna and William Nussbaum, Mr. and Mrs. James E. Schneithorst, Jain and Richard Shaikewitz, Mark Twain Bancshares, Inc., Mr. and Mrs. Gary Wolff, Mr. and Mrs. Lester P. Ackerman, Jr., Hon. and Mrs. Thomas F. Eagleton, Alison and John Ferring, Mrs. Gail K. Fischmann, Mr. and Mrs. Solon Gershman, Dr. and Mrs. Gary Hansen, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Kranzberg, Mr. and Mrs. Gyo Obata, Warren and Jane Shapleigh, Lee and Barbara Wagman, Mr. John Weil, Museum Shop Fund, Contemporary Art Society, and Museum Purchase, Dr. and Mrs. Harold J. Joseph, Estate of Alice P. Francis, Fine Arts Associates, J. Lionberger Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Edison, Mr. and Mrs. Morton D. May, Estate of Louise H. Franciscus, Anonymous Gift, Miss Ella M. Boedeker, and Museum Purchase, by exchange 1:1991.

The Legacy of W. R. Valentiner

Selected Acquisitions

The Museum's collection has been enriched by its first director in a number of ways. W. R. Valentiner made gifts to the Museum during his lifetime — and energetically used his influence to persuade others to follow his example. (It is estimated that, because of his contacts, more than 150 works of art were donated to the Museum during Valentiner's two-year tenure as director.) Valentiner bequeathed eighty-four objects to the Museum, and with the help of various contributors the Museum was able to purchase additional works from his estate. A complete checklist of all the Valentiner-related acquisitions would reveal remarkable quality and scope, ranging over several centuries and countries and media. Pictured on the following pages is a selection from the modern works of art.

1. William Baziotes
American, 1912 – 1963
Moon Animal, 1949
Watercolor with ink and charcoal on paper
14 1/2 x 12 in. (36.8 x 30.5 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.1

2. Max Beckmann
German, 1884 – 1950, active in United States from 1947
Self-Portrait, 1932
Watercolor and charcoal on paper
24 3/4 x 18 7/8 in. (62.8 x 48 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.4

3. Henry Bertoia
American, 1915 – 1978
Tree, 1958
Brazed welded-metal model
14 x 10 1/2 x 6 1/4 in.
(35.5 x 26.6 x 15.9 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.7

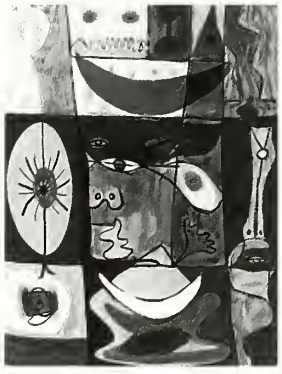
4. Lovis Corinth
German, 1858 – 1925
Female Figure, 1918
Watercolor on paper
13 x 10 in. (33 x 25.4 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.11

5. Charles Demuth
American, 1883 – 1935
Flowers, circa 1915
Watercolor on paper
18 1/8 x 12 in. (46 x 30.5 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.12

6. Richard Diebenkorn
American, 1922 – 1993
Untitled, 1951
Gouache on paper
27 x 24 in. (68.6 x 61 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.14

7.

8.



9.

10.

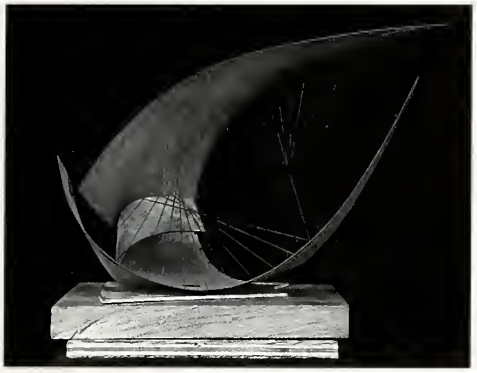
11.

7–8. Alberto Giacometti
Swiss, 1901–1966
The Studio, 1948
Graphite on paper
Image, recto 18 3/8 x 11 3/4 in. (46.7 x 29.8 cm)
Image, verso 10 x 12 1/4 in. (25.4 x 31.1 cm)
Sheet 22 x 15 1/8 in. (55.9 x 38.4 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.20

9. Adolph Gottlieb
American, 1903–1974
Incubus, 1947
Gouache on paper
23 1/4 x 17 3/8 in. (59 x 44.1 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.21

10. Morris Graves
American, born 1910
Raven in Moonlight, 1943
Tempera on paper mounted on board
22 1/2 x 26 3/4 in. (57.2 x 68 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.23

11. Erich Heckel
German, 1883–1970
Landscape, 1921
Watercolor and charcoal on paper
18 x 22 7/8 in. (45.7 x 58.1 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.26



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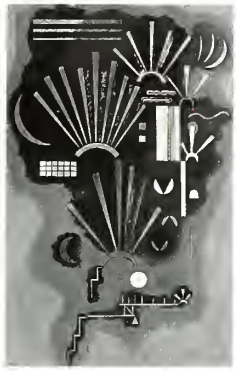


13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

12. Barbara Hepworth
British, 1903–1975
Curlew II—String Figure, 1957
Copper and string
9 3/4 x 13 x 7 1/4 in.
(24.8 x 33 x 18.4 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.27

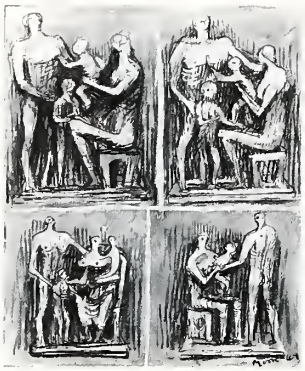
13. Vasily Kandinsky
Russian, 1866–1944, active
in Germany and France
Zunehmen (also known as *Croissonce*), 1933
Oil, egg tempera, and ink on paper
20 1/16 x 12 3/8 in. (51 x 31.4 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.29

14. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
German, died Switzerland, 1880–1938
Flowers, Still Life, circa 1935
Watercolor on paper
20 1/8 x 14 in. (51.2 x 35.5 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.32

15. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner
German, died Switzerland, 1880–1938
Young Shepherd with Flower, 1918
Oil with small additions of wax
on canvas
27 1/2 x 24 in. (69.8 x 61 cm)
Anonymous gift 63.23.1

16. Oscar Kokoschka
Austrian, 1886–1980
Womon's Heod, circa 1920
Crayon on paper
27 1/8 x 19 5/8 in. (68.9 x 49.9 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.37

17. Wilhelm Lehmbruck
German, 1881–1919
Heod of o Womon, 1913–14
Plaster
17 1/2 x 13 1/2 x 9 3/4 in.
(44.4. x 34.3 x 24.8 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.42



18.

19.

20.

21.

22.

18. Henry Moore
British, 1898–1986
Family Group, 1949
Ink, wash, crayon, and graphite on paper
11 1/2 x 9 1/2 in. (29.2 x 24.1 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.47

19. Robert Motherwell
American, 1915–1991
Ile de France, 1952
Watercolor on paper
7 1/2 x 10 5/8 in. (19 x 27 cm)
Gift of W. R. Valentiner 57.34.6

20. Emil Nolde
German, 1867–1956
Landscape, circa 1925
Watercolor on paper
12 1/4 x 19 in. (31.1 x 48.2 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.50

21. Emil Nolde
German, 1867–1956
Still Life, Tulips, circa 1930
Watercolor on paper
18 3/4 x 13 7/8 in. (47.6 x 35.2 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.51

22. Serge Poliakoff
French, born Russia, 1906–1969
Abstract, circa 1955
Gouache on paper
17 3/8 x 23 1/4 in. (44.1 x 59 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.52

23.

24.

25.

26.

27.

23. Christian Rohlfs
German, 1849–1938
Still Life, circa 1938
Gouache on paper
23 1/2 x 18 3/4 in. (59.7 x 47.7 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.56

24. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
German, 1884–1976
Gothic Spire, 1921
Watercolor on paper
19 1/2 x 14 in. (49.5 x 35.5 cm)
Purchased with funds from the State of North Carolina 64.5.1

25. Karl Schmidt-Rottluff
German, 1884–1976
Still Life, circa 1922
Oil on canvas
29 x 25 5/8 in. (73.7 x 65.1 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10. 59

26. David Smith
American, 1906–1965
Classic Figure III, 1945
Bronze
13 x 7 x 4 in. (33 x 17.8 x 10.2 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.60

27. Graham Sutherland
British, 1903–1980
Reclining Stone Form, 1948
Gouache, ink, charcoal, and wax crayon on paper
8 13/16 x 11 3/8 in. (22.4 x 28.9 cm)
Bequest of W. R. Valentiner 65.10.63

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